ANIMATION WORLD

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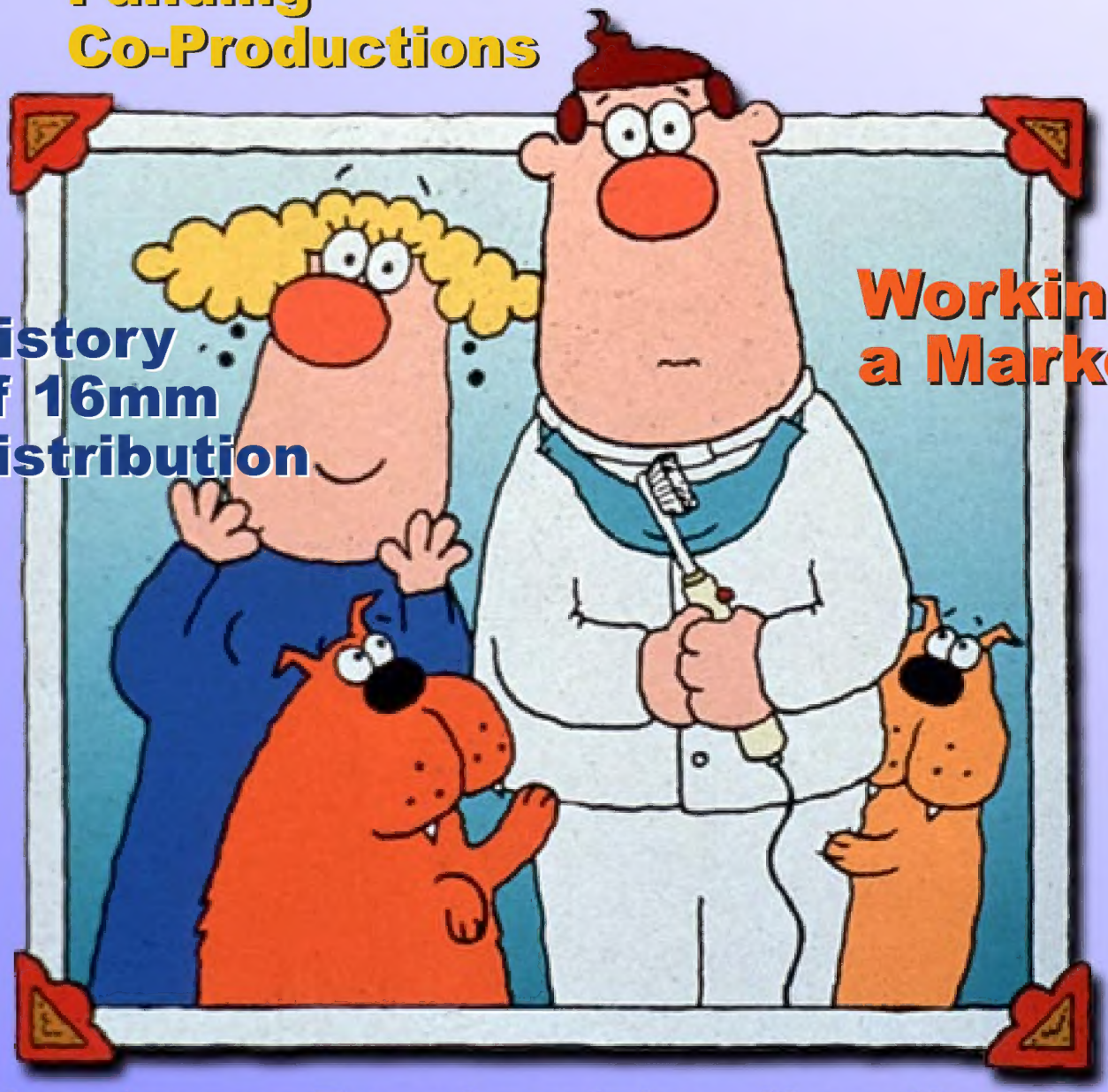
Producing Results

Funding Co-Productions



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Cover: *Bob & Margaret,* a new animated series coming this fall, based on the 1995 Oscar-winning short film *Bob's Birthday* by Alison Snowden and David Fine. This Canadian/British co-production demonstrates the possibilities for series development of short films. © NELVANA Limited, Inc. and Snowden Fine Productions.

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EDITOR'S NOTEBOOK

by Heather Kenyon

Where there is a will, a way can sometimes be created...

Producing Results....what have I learned about producing results? About getting a project actually made and on the screen, be it small or big? There is no set path and there is definitely no set rhyme or reason to the pattern of what gets made or why.

There are a lot of paths to choose from, all of which naturally cannot be covered in one issue of *Animation World Magazine*. There are the people that get agents right out of school. There are people that become bartenders and gain "life experience" for a few years before focusing on their career. There are those that put together a pitch and hit the markets. There are those that publish comic books, gain momentum and then seek out the studio's decision makers. Then there are those that seek out grants and make more personal works. The fact that there isn't a set road to follow can either be scary or freeing depending on how one looks at it.

We can always look at others and compare ourselves to their career progress. We wonder how we can get to where they are and feel a little lost and miserable when things aren't working out. "How do they do it? How come there isn't anyone to tell *me* exactly how to do it?" This is looking on the downside.

The upside is...you are never wrong. Regardless of the track that you are taking to reach your goals, you are completely, 100% correct in your actions and no one can tell you differently. As long as you make intelligent decisions for specific reasons and base your actions on research then you are just as much in the running as the guy next to you. Research is absolutely key. You need to know the market. You need to read about trends, both artistic and business oriented, and be able to put them into perspective as either truth or a few weird flukes. Watch the industry. Read, ask questions and call. Just call and ask. What's the worse that can happen to you? They say, "No," and I have a remedy for that one at the end of this piece. I was recently introduced to the first person who ever rejected my application for a job after I graduated school. He didn't remember me and I had even called him, spoke to him a few times, sent my resume and then was rejected. Granted this was a few years ago, but believe me, no one is keeping score and if you ask good questions maybe someone will remember you.

Another variable in the equation of success is luck, fate or whatever you would like to call it. This too can work both ways. A development executive that you have been working with for months can suddenly get a new job elsewhere or be fired for that matter. The day of your big pitch perhaps the creative executive's dog bit her, her car is in the shop, her mother phoned to tell her she feels neglected, etc. No matter how amazing your pitch is, if it is a comedy, she may not feel like laughing. However, you may be in luck if it is a drama or if your protagonist is a penguin and her boss has just told her, "Penguins make me laugh..." Either way, these are all elements out of your control which can work for you and against you. While events like this are frustrating, they cannot be avoided.

While all these roads to seeing your work on the screen cannot be mapped, a few pointers do seem to remain steady throughout the research that went into this issue. If you are serious about getting your work produced, you have to talk to people, you have to meet the right people and you have to convince them to trust you. After all, people don't give just anyone a lot of money to go off and make an animated film. You might not get a yes right away but maybe next time you come in with a pitch they will remember you. Good relationships, as well as unbelievable determination and talent, are the key.

Now, here's a new way to look at the word, "no." A family friend who is in sales once told me that on average a salesman gets told, "no," nineteen times for every "yes." So, when someone rejects your project, thank them because you are now one step closer to a yes. We all hear about the person whose first pitch is bought and now they have their own series and are fabulously successful. These are the exceptions. Not the rules. The truth of the matter is that it takes a lot of hard work, false starts and stops and schlepping to get results. Sometimes, it is a matter of who schleps the longest.

Good luck and we'll see you at NATPE in New Orleans,
Heather

editor@awn.com

Computer Game Thanks!

Thank you for Volume 2, Issue 9. I work in the gaming industry as a Softimage animator, but I have about twenty-four years experience in traditional stop-motion animation techniques. I especially enjoyed the article on the clay animation process being done at The Neverhood.

Regards,
Tom Brierton

But Wait There's More

I am a lead artist at a game developer in the Los Angeles area and formerly of Electronic Arts. I think a couple of additions to your art tool list for interactive media is needed (Samoff 2.9). For today's game artist, 3-D art tools are a necessity to stay competitive. Most studios are using 3D StudioMax, some Lightwave, and a few, Softimage and Alias packages. Experience with at least one of these packages is, for the most part, very important for someone trying to break into the industry.

Thank you and the entire AWN editorial staff for the information you provide,
Josh Book

Film "Reviews" Continued...

I would have to agree with my colleague at Disney that it was not right to have someone who worked for Fox review *Anastasia* (Deneroff 2.8). I like Harvey Deneroff and feel that he is one of the best writers on animation out there, but this time around there was a conflict of interest. You know that the same people who hired him to do the book are probably reading his review of the movie.

The *Hercules* review by the Greek scholar was an amusing, humorous piece (Rundin 2.4) but did not qualify as a film review. I found both reviews deficient, if for different reasons. Why not get Nicholas Radhzinsky (author of *The Last Tsar*) to write the review of *Anastasia*, commenting only on the film's fidelity to Russian history, and then have the authors of the *Hercules* art book review that movie? Both will be equally self serving and misleading to the readers. Film reviews should be about the film as a whole and should be done by people with no stakes in the matter. I hope that you can improve this one serious failing in your otherwise excellent magazine.

- Nancy Beiman

Okay, okay... We'll stop trying to be clever and have more "straight" reviews. Pity, we had just located that lion tamer for The Lion King *direct-to-video release...*

On a serious note, thank you. Feedback from our readers about what works and what doesn't only helps us create a stronger magazine for everyone. We always welcome hearing which articles and themes people enjoyed and which they didn't.

Don Messick Memory

It is too bad Don Messick passed away. He, like Frank Welker, did voices for hundreds of cartoons. His credits can be seen at the end of almost every cartoon. He did the voice of Scarecrow, in *Challenge of the Superfriends*, as well as other *Superfriends* cartoons. I wish the best for his family and friends.

- Anonymous

He will be missed...

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Funding Co-Productions: A Complicated But Tasty Recipe

by Michael Hirsh

Editor's Note: When we decided to investigate how the complicated world of international co-productions really works, we turned to someone who successfully assembles these deals everyday. As co-CEO of NELVANA Limited in Toronto, Michael Hirsh has overseen co-productions with over half a dozen countries. In this article, Michael explains firsthand the recipe for success that has NELVANA's co-productions filling the airways on both sides of the Atlantic and beyond.

For those of you who have attended the television markets at NATPE, MIP TV and MIPCOM, you have probably noticed that a great deal of animated product coming from outside the United States is the result of international co-productions. These animated series and features are the products of many negotiations, collaborations and international cultural mediations. This article is an attempt to summarize the delicate and very creative process of bringing an international animated co-production to the screen.

Finding the Elements

The first step is to locate a property that will travel well across borders. NELVANA has often used classic properties, partly because they have a universal appeal and work well for a variety of worldwide audiences. A real advantage that animated co-productions have over their live-action counterparts is that they often have no specific cultural references. Franklin, for instance, is a talking turtle who has no basis in regional reality. His forest home could be found anywhere in the world. Animation is also much easier to dub into multiple languages than live-action programming.

Once you have found a unique property that is likely to have a wide international appeal, the next step is to locate a co-production partner or partners. A co-production partner must be based in a country with which your own country has a co-production treaty. Unlike the United States, Canada and several other countries have set up international co-production treaties which establish the parameters of a co-production deal between the two countries. Each treaty is different and serves as a guide throughout negotiations. Canada, for instance, has signed more than twenty such treaties with various countries around the world including France, Germany, the UK, Spain, China and Russia.

Franklin, for instance, is a talking turtle who has no basis in regional reality.

Simply finding an available animation company in the appropriate country is not nearly enough. A suitable partner must also think the same way about animation as you do. A key preliminary question is, "What does each partner want out of the production?" Sometimes, one partner is very committed to high quality while the other wants to do a quick and dirty low-budget project. It is crucial to know these differences up front.

Michael Hirsh.

Structuring the Deal

There are many ways to financially structure a co-production agreement. It could be anything from a five year licensing arrangement with a broadcaster who funds part of the budget, to agreements that carve out distribution rights by territory. Every deal is different, but here are a few of the elements that we look for in structuring a deal. We usually seek out a partner who is capable of sharing the risk with us in exchange for the upside (back-end profit). We therefore want a partner who is solvent and has the kind of capital to contribute to an animated series that will cost approximately U.S. $350,000 per episode on average.

We also look for a partner who's government provides financial incentives that complement

Franklin is a co-production between NELVANA (Canada), Neurones s.a.r.l. (France) and Neurones (Luxembourg). Image courtesy of and © NELVANA.

those provided by Canada. These incentives will often come in the form of tax breaks. We also look for a deal that fulfills European as well as Canadian content quotas. If a German broadcaster is looking for German content and our co-production qualifies as German, we have just made the programmer's job a lot easier while increasing market penetration for ourselves. The same, obviously holds true for our partner, who may be looking for increased penetration into North America.

There is a risk that, without the proper creative cohesion, a series or feature will become what Canadians call a "Europudding"...

Ideally, we will come to an agreement whereby each partner can take advantage of production subsidies in the other partner's country. This allows the production as a whole to broaden its funding base.

Keeping the Creative On Track

In negotiations with a potential co-producer, we also look to minimize the risks. There is a risk that, without the proper creative cohesion, a series or feature will become what Canadians call a "Europudding" - a series or feature that is run by committee. This kind of product inevitably loses its creative thrust and audience appeal. A strong creative partnership will preclude this kind of situation.

Constant and open communication is essential since the specter of cultural differences will inevitably rear its ugly head.

Ned's Newt is a great example of a Canada/Germany co-production agreement that worked well for two partners. This animated series showcases the talents of each partner in a way that enhances the series as a whole. NELVANA had the project in development when we approached TMO Film GmbH about a co-production agreement. We retained distribution and worldwide merchandising rights to the property. TMO acquired the right to distribute the series in its native Germany. In this agreement, we share in each other's revenues to a degree. Each entity recoups first for the area it has invested in, and then the profits are split.

The division of labor is the tricky task that comes next. Budgets must be split in such way that the production qualifies as local content in each participant's country. The creative control is then negotiated, with script and storyboard approvals assigned to the participants. In the case of *Ned's Newt,* TMO, our German partner, is painting, compositing and rendering the series with the help of a company in Hungary. In Canada, NELVANA is handling script, storyboard, design, art direction and post-production. Layout and posing are split between NELVANA and TMO with digitally scanned animation being done in the Philippines.

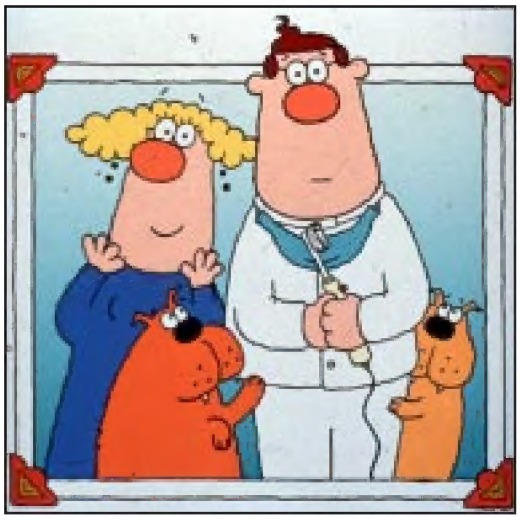
With television animation, delivery dates become a pressing issue. It is crucial that each partner be aware of the other partners' delivery dates. The whole team must work together to meet broadcaster requirements.

Constant and open communication is essential since the specter of cultural differences will inevitably rear its ugly head. It has been a challenge to adapt *Ned's Newt* for international audiences. The humor, essentially North American based, hosts personalities with definite cultural references, and frenetic slapstick comedy that provides a universal appeal of sophisticated and subtle adult humor.

A Worthy Risk

There are many reasons to pursue this kind of venture, despite the inherent risks and increased complexity in negotiations. The recent proliferation of specialty channels launched in France,

Ned's Newt is a Canadian/German co-production with additional work being completed in the Philippines. Image courtesy of and © NELVANA.



NELVANA will co-produce Bob & Margaret with Channel 4Television Corporation (U.K.) in association with CanWest Global System. The series is being licensed to CanWest Global in Canada, Comedy Central in the U.S. and Channel 4Television in the U.K. NELVANA Enterprises Inc. will distribute the series worldwide excluding the United Kingdom. Image courtesy of and © NELVANA.

Germany, the U.K., Latin America and Asia, have created a greater demand for children's product in those markets. A great way to enter those markets is to become a player there. Co-productions allow instant access.

The biggest advantage to co-production is the ability it affords you to reduce the cost of any one show.

The biggest advantage to co-productions is the ability it affords you to reduce the cost of any one show. Although co-productions present their own challenges, they give your company a competitive edge on a crowded playing field.

A Recipe for Success

A successful co-production is like a great meal. Even if you follow the directions carefully, you will never end up with exactly the same taste. Keeping that in mind, here is a recipe for a successful co-production:

Start with two or more ripe production companies with sufficient capital.

Add while stirring constantly:

- a fresh, leafy Canadian script with international appeal
- talented storyboard editors using sharp knives
- a gallon of French art direction
- a mixture of Czech music
- one dozen Swedish layout artists
- three dozen Korean DAT tapes of animation
- one large Hungarian ink, paint and compositing facility

Quickly add re-shoots, incorporating comments from around the world. Bring to a boil then add:

- a well-seasoned post production crew assembled using state of the art editing utensils

Serve immediately through strong distribution channels.

(Metric conversions available in four languages upon request. Dessert should be the sweet taste of success; no heavy Europuddings.)

Michael Hirsh is co-CEO of NELVANA Limited, a company whose recent co-productions include Bob and Margaret, The Neverending Story, Rupert the Bear, Stickin' Around, Donkey Kong Country , Blazing Dragons , Ned's Newt *and* Franklin.

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Working the Floor at International Program Markets

by Dominic Schreiber

So, after weeks and months of slaving over your drawing board you've finally come up with the highly original concept that you just know is going to be the next *Rugrats, Tom and Jerry* or *The Simpsons.* What's more, after knocking on the doors of every television network in the country for the past year, you've finally got someone interested in paying you some money to make the show. The problem is, they can only put up about a quarter of the financing, and even if you're lucky enough to live in a country where the government offers grants and subsidies for animation producers (i.e. France or Canada), you're still going to be short several million dollars.

This month, thousands of distributors and television program executives will wheel and deal on the showroom floor at NATPE '98, January 19-22 in New Orleans. Photo courtesy of and © NATPE.

Getting results at the international markets can be a hard slog.

The Hard Slog

So what next? Well, you can always follow independent filmmaker Robert Rodriguez's example and fund the series by selling your body to medical science. But perhaps a less dangerous, if not necessarily less painful option, is to hit the international program markets - MIP , MIPCOM and NATPE - in search of foreign partners who can patch together the rest of the financing. On paper that might look simple enough. Indeed, the idea of jetting off to Cannes for a week of schmoozing with the likes of Linda Simensky might sound very appealing. However, a week of back to back appointments trapped inside a convention center with 10,000 other participants is no holiday. Plus, with an ever-growing number of companies looking to exploit the strong international appeal of animation, and even well-established players such as Film Roman and Sunbow seeking international partners to fund new projects, getting results at the international markets can be a hard slog.

"In the early '90s, if you picked up a MIP preview you'd struggle to find more than a dozen adverts for animation," observes Mikael Shields, managing director at EVA Entertainment, one of Europe's busiest co-producers and distributors. "If you look at it now you'll find that there's 30 or 40 or 50. As well as the Cinars, NELVANAs and EVAs, you'll find that X documentary producer has suddenly tried to develop a 26 half-hour animated series and lo and behold, he's finding its much more commercial than his other stuff."

Even animation festivals, such as Annecy, now an annual event complete with its own International Animated Film Market (MIFA), and Cardiff and Ottawa, are attracting a growing number of producers looking to tie up deals with international distributors and foreign TV nets. "MIFA has grown immensely over the years," says Abby Terkuhle, president, MTV Animation, who has been attending Annecy for the last decade. "I used to go just to hang with the animators and find new talent. Now people are looking for financing there so we're looking to acquire and to co-produce."

Preparation is Key

So how do you stand out on

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Knowing the names and faces of production partners and programming decision-makers is an important part of making the most of a market. From left to right: Linda Simensky, Vice President of Original Animation, Cartoon Network; Theresa Plummer-Andrews, Head of Acquisitions & Creative Development for the BBC; Abby Terkuhle, President of MTV Animation and Creative Director of MTV.

this increasingly crowded playing field? Half the trick is in the preparation, as Fran Barlow, head of marketing at EVA Entertainment, and former festival director of the Cardiff International Animation Festival, explains: "Once upon a time everyone knew each other at these events but times are changing. Now MIPCOM attracts over 10,000 people. The first thing you need to do is pre-book. The people you want to see usually have a very busy schedule so you need to be booking two to three weeks before the market." Of course, it helps if you make your appointment with the head of children's programming and not the commissioning editor for wildlife documentaries. "At MIP and MIPCOM animation is just a very small area of the market so you need to do your research," adds Barlow. "You need to find out who the buyers and players you need to see are."

"You need to find out who the buyers and players you need to see are." - Fran Barlow

One way to get to know the key players is to enlist the services of a deal-broker or co-production consultant, which is exactly what Burbank-based animation studio Film Roman did, when it went searching for international partners to develop its own proprietary series such as *C-Bear and Jamal*. "About three years ago we got an international consultant, Neil Court, who is an experienced person in Europe," says company president Phil Roman. "He took us to MIP, showed us around and introduced us to all the major players from all the different countries. It was fairly easy making a lot of these meetings because they already knew who we were, they knew the shows that we had produced. It made our job easier when we had to go and say can we make a deal, where we can finance some of the show up front."

Pitching Pointers

Unfortunately, not many newcomers at MIP or MIPCOM can boast the kind of track record that Phil Roman has, so once you get your schedule of back-to-back appointments booked, it's important that you turn up with something to show. "Have a really well-structured pitch," says C.J. Kettler, President of New York-based producer and distributor Sunbow Entertainment. "The more we see of a property that's really fully-fledged and we can visualize it ourselves the more likely we would be interested in it as partners. The best thing is to really think it through and visualize it, get story lines and characters fleshed out and certainly have some artwork as well."

Also, think about the age group you're targeting. "What really drives us crazy is when people haven't done the marketing," says Maureen Serry, executive vice president at France's Marina, whose *Mr. Men* series is currently airing in U.S. syndication. "Think about who the audience is you're aiming for. That's essential for a TV station."

"Have a really well structured pitch." - C.J. Kettler

Marc du Pontavice, president of Gaumont Multimedia, goes one step further, recommending producers bring a trailer: "Without a trailer you're dead in Europe. There are so many indie producers from all over the world trying to get money from Europe so it's very tough." Du Pontavice knows all too well the effort required to put together a series. Back in 1993 he came up with the idea of *Home To Rent*, a comedy about a group of aliens who get abandoned on earth. He spent the next couple of years trying to sell it to the U.S. networks. "All the networks would say, 'Great concept, great characters, lovely story but the Europeans just cannot do this kind of show.' So we decided to go ahead with the backing of France 3 and Pro Seiben in Germany." In 1996 du Pontavice was back at MIPCOM with the first

The Sunbow Entertainment booth at MIPCOM. Sunbow staffers, from left to right: Janet Scardino, senior vice president of International Sales & Co-Production; Bernadette Madlangbayan, manager of Press & Marketing and Carrie Romeo, director of Sales & Acquisitions. Photo by Alisa Anderson.

episode of the series. This time Fox picked up the series (and subsequently named it *Space Goofs*) and Gaumont became one of the first European producers to sell an animated series to a U.S. network.

Finally, it's important to remember that the markets are all about building relationships.

Besides the show itself, marketing materials are also an important element when you're looking to stand out. "It's very, very important to brand yourself and every single thing to do with EVA is branded," says Mikael Shields. "It's trying to differentiate us as much as possible from the rest of the market. If you've only got time to visit 15 suppliers out of a potential 100, you must visit us."

Raising the Profile

One way to ensure you attract visitors at a market is the offer of free alcohol and a party can really help create a buzz. Klasky Csupo's parties at Annecy, Cardiff and the World Animation Celebration are now legendary. However, for a smaller player, it's tough to compete against the lavish receptions thrown by the likes of Time Warner and MTV. "We don't do parties at MIP and MIPCOM because there's so many going on, you just get swamped," says Fran Barlow. As a relatively new company, EVA doesn't advertise at the markets either, although it does hold screenings; last MIP it attracted a full house for two showings of Daniel Greaves' *Flatworld*. EVA also sponsors events such as Cardiff, Annecy and the World Summit for Children's Programming. "It's a way of putting money back into the business and it's proved very successful for raising our profile," adds Barlow.

Taking a booth at a market is another way of raising your profile. "We've been taking a stand for eleven years now and we're soundly positioned as a niche player in children's, family and teen programming," says C.J. Kettler. "Our regular buyers as well as new buyers know where to come to at the markets." However, taking a stand can also have its drawbacks, especially for a smaller player. "My advice would be don't take a stand - get out there and visit other people's stands," says Maureen Serry. "When you take a stand you have to wait for people to come to you. We only started taking a stand a couple of years ago."

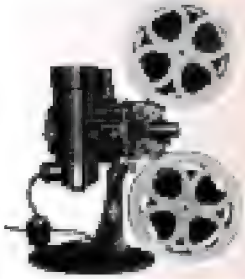
Markets Are A Beginning

Finally, it's important to remember that the markets are all about building relationships. You might not come away with a deal signed for your new series but you will hopefully have forged some valuable friendships. "Sales of shows are done, but if you're pitching a new show, you don't conclude deals at a market," says du Pontavice. "You're better off going straight to see a broadcaster."

C.J. Kettler echoes that view: "The markets are just another way to stay in touch. The sales team really does most of its selling by visiting clients. The product announcements are geared towards the markets but that is by no means the only time the sales team will see our clients. We're out there seeing them four or five times a year."

Dominic Schreiber is a senior publicist for K Media Relations and a contributor to Television Business International *and* Animation Magazine. *He is currently completing an extensive report on the international television animation industry for the publishers of the UK's* Financial Times *newspaper.*

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.



The Unnatural History of Independent Animated Films on 16mm.

by Karl Cohen

Once upon a time there was a world without video tape. The commerce in animation was on film and there were dozens of distributors who listed cartoons and independent animation in their catalogs. School districts and colleges were buying and renting almost anything animated that was "educational." A new theatrical show called *The Tournee of Animation* was showing the latest and greatest films from around the world. Animation was sometimes shown at museums, libraries and art houses.

During this period television rarely showed anything animated except television commercials and limited animation stuff made for the tube. Of course there were daily cartoon shows that showed old Hollywood films, but nobody was seriously interested in buying rights to artistic works. They wanted to keep costs low and needed quantity, not quality, to fill all the air time between the commercials.

Non-Theatrical Distribution From 1900 - 1960

Before explaining what film distribution was like at its peak in the 1960s and 70s, a quick look at the history of non-theatrical distribution and the development of the 16mm format is in order. Distribution of films to places other than theaters (non-theatrical) began almost 100 years ago. Corporations were among the first to explore non-theatrical venues. A film about the Alaskan gold rush was made by the Northwest Transportation Company in 1899 and shown at the Paris Exposition in 1900. By the early teens some salesmen representing trade associations and corporations were traveling with 35mm films and portable projectors. They presented free shows to promote their sponsors' interests.

Distribution of films to places other than theaters (non-theatrical) began almost 100 years ago.

Another small non-theatrical industry developed around pornographic films before WWI. Animators created *Eveready Harton in Buried Treasure*, around 1928. This funny hard-core cartoon may have been made for a private party honoring Winsor McCay by Walter Lantz, Rudy Zamora Sr., George Stallings and George Canata. Other X-rated cartoons were produced in the 1920s and 30s.

The first non-theatrical catalog of education films was published by George Kleine in 1910. He offered to lease 35mm films. Apparently his venture was a failure and one account says he never recovered the cost of printing his 336 page catalog. Kleine went on to import some of the first successful feature-length films from Italy just before WWI.

In 1921 Kleine created a non-theatrical distribution system that brought "clean" films to schools, museums and other non-commercial users. He gave users of his "Cycle of Classics" free 35mm projectors and charged a per reel fee plus 65% of the admission income. The venture wasn't too successful and was abandoned in 1928 with the coming of sound. His silent projectors had become obsolete almost overnight.

The educational market slowly developed in the 1920s and 30s. Kodak introduced 16mm safety film in 1923. In the 1930s home movie cameras were introduced along with black and white reversal film stocks and Kodachrome film (1936). Bell and Howell and other companies vigorously marketed their 16mm sound projectors.

To further promote 16mm as a format, Eastman Kodak went into the film rental and sales business. In the 1930s they introduced the Kodascope Library which contained 16mm prints of Hollywood features and shorts.

Several sponsored animated

films were made in the 1930s. General Motors promoted itself in *A Coach for Cinderella* (1936), the first industrial produced in Technicolor. It was produced by the Jam Handy Organization in Detroit. The company had already animated *Down the Gasoline Trail* (1935) for Chevrolet and they later produced other animated shorts. Handy is best known for their post-war live-action films that glorified the product lines of GM. In the late 1950s the company had a staff of 500 and made between 150 and 200 films a year.

Another animated gem from the 1930s is *The Sunshine Makers*. It was directed by Burt Gillett and Ted Eshbaugh in New York at the Van Beuren Studio. It promotes the consumption of milk and was in fact sponsored by Bordens Milk.

The period from the late 1920s to the 1940s saw the beginning of artists in the U.S. using film as an art form. Among the first animated or partly-animated films to be seen by the American public were works by Mary Ellen Bute. Her films were shown at Radio City Music Hall in the late 1930s and early 40s. Norman McLaren came to the U.S. from England in the late 1930s. He worked on one of Bute's films (*Spook Sport*), did work for what later became the Guggenheim Museum, and was commissioned in 1939 to do a short work for NBC-TV when it was an experimental station.

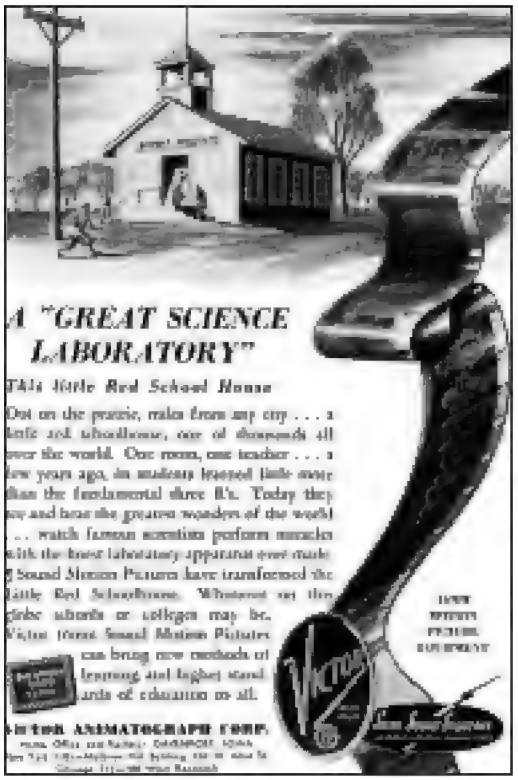
In the 1940s the war brought on the rise of public information films (another name for propaganda) and some of it was animated. The 16mm format was used extensively by both the military and groups showing information films to the public. Bugs Bunny was used to sell war bonds, Donald Duck reminded people to pay their income taxes on time and Minnie Mouse recycled kitchen fats for the war effort.

After the war thousands of military surplus 16mm "JAN" sound projectors were sold to schools and other institutions at low costs. This helped make 16mm a more accessible format.

At the close of the war the company that was to become UPA made two animated films for the United Auto Workers and CIO. *Hell Bent for Election* was made to get out the vote for Roosevelt in 1944 and *Brotherhood of Man*, 1946, promoted racial tolerance. The latter was made to help the autoworkers integrate factories in the south. Both films are admired today for their use of contemporary graphic design.

Bugs Bunny was used to sell war bonds, Donald Duck reminded people to pay their income taxes on time and Minnie Mouse recycled kitchen fats for the war effort.

Another popular animated sponsored film for the non-theatrical market was Hugh Harmon's *Winky the Watchman*, 1947. It was made for a dental association and it promotes the proper care of teeth. Harmon and his partner Rudolph Ising also produced a long animated work for Van de Camp Foods in their Los Angeles studio.



An early ad promoting the home use of film projectors for education.

Some of the animated films made in the 1950s now seem unintentionally funny, like the animated turtle that tells us to "duck and cover" in case of an atomic blast, or the atomic man in John Sutherland's *A is for Atom*. John Sutherland Productions was formed in Los Angeles in 1945 and produced a great number of propaganda/informational films over the years.

Among the best educational films were a science series sponsored by Bell Labs. They hired Frank Capra to produce them and Dr. Frank Baxter was the host. *Our Mr. Sun* (1955) featured animation directed by Bill Hurtz at UPA. Shamus Culhane (NYC) provided animated sequences for three Bell Labs films: *Hemo the Magnificent* (1956), *The Strange Case of Cosmic Rays* (1957) and *The Unchained Goddess* (1958).

How Non-Theatrical Animation Worked

The educational film market grew rapidly in the 1960s. When the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957, the U.S. Congress realized something had to be done to better educate the baby boomers. By the early 1960s Congress had passed the National Defense Education Act which gave enormous sums of money to school districts. Some of the money was for the acquisition of films and other types of audio visual materials like film-strips, slides and records. There was also a growing market for films at colleges, public libraries, military bases, prisons, churches and other institutions.

The basic sales tool for these companies was their illustrated catalog. In addition to the catalog, distributors often produced slick flyers and supplements intended to promote an interest in a specific film or series of films. Educational film distributors also produced study guides to accompany some of their films. Aggressive companies promoted their product lines at conventions, conferences and workshops. The annual Educational Film Library Association conference (EFLA) was a major trade show that was once attended by thousands of film buyers.

Most distributors who sold films provided free preview prints to reviewers who wrote for the trade publications (*Film News, EFLA Evaluations, Booklist, Film Library Quarterly,* etc.) and to potential film buyers for libraries and school districts.

When the Soviet Union launched Sputnik in 1957, the U.S. Congress realized something had to be done to better educate the baby boomers.

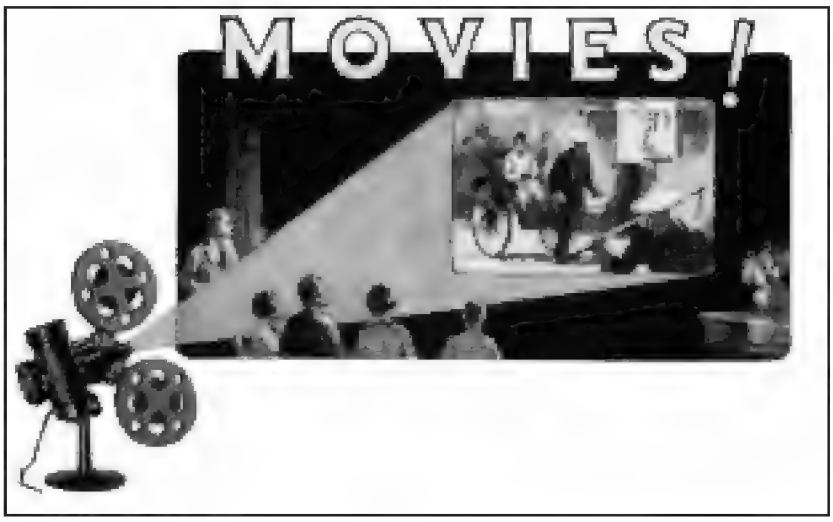
Distributors also promoted their films by entering them in festivals. Print sales often increased after a film won a major prize. Festivals were also a way for school teachers and other film people to see new product. Hopefully they would then ask their school district to buy a print of something they liked.

There was once a large number of distribution companies and they varied in size and focus. Some rented a full line of entertainment features and shorts while others specialized in well-made educational films. Some companies had lots of animated shorts in their catalogs, while others had only a few titles or none. A few companies specialized in the importation and sale of shorts from Canada and other countries. Others produced their own product lines.

A number of distributors specialized in films that required them to produce the work. Weston Woods Studios turns popular children's books into animated shorts. They still acquire the film rights and then hire artists to do the artwork. Gene Deitch, who has headed his own studio in Prague since 1960, has animated several of Weston Woods' award-winning shorts.

Contracts between distributors and animators is a subject that is somewhat difficult to discuss as there is no such thing as a standard agreement. A contract might offer a payment based on a film's gross or on its' net profit. A filmmaker could receive anywhere between 15% to 40% of the gross receipts (25% to 30% was more or less the average around 1970) or 50% of the net profit. If a film with a net deal is a hit and the distributor is honest the filmmaker can make a good deal of money. On the other hand, if the distributor pads the account with meals and gifts for his friends, etc. the filmmaker may get nothing.

Some distributors mainly sold films to which they had exclusive rights. Other companies had some exclusive films to offer. They supplemented that income with the rental of films that they sub-distributed. They would buy or lease a print for a fixed price from another distributor or the producer of the film and put it in their rental collection. They kept whatever income the print produced for them. The



creator of the film only made money from the sale of the print. Sub-distribution deals are non-exclusive so more than one company could buy the print and rent it. Filmmakers made money by selling as many prints as possible.

I found a contract dated January 15, 1982, between King Features Syndicate Division and a non-theatrical distributor for the lease of a print of *The Yellow Submarine*. It called for the payment of $1,400 and allowed the distributor to use the print for non-theatrical rentals. The contract prohibited theatrical or commercial use of the print including exhibition to a paying audience. Distributors sometimes looked the other way if the film was rented by someone who was going to ask for a "donation" at the door. The company rented the film for $100 in their 1982 catalog.

An interesting contract was offered animators by Prescott Wright when he produced *The Tournee of Animation* (1970 - 1986). The producer, Wright and his associates, got 50% of the gross and the remaining 50% was split among the artists. About half of the money going to the animators was split evenly and the remaining amount was split based on how long each short was. That meant a really short film got slightly less than a film a minute or two longer. As the cost of producing the show rose, the percentage the producer took changed to 55% and finally 60%.

Another type of deal was offered by Mike Getz, who ran a midnight movie series for many years. He paid $1 a minute per screening. I had one film that Getz showed many times. It turned a profit for me after I deducted production and print costs. When the print eventually came back it was covered with scratches and was barely usable, but it had made me a profit.

The Distribution Companies

The following discussion covers a few of the companies that distributed animation in the 1960s and '70s. They were selected to give a fairly good idea of how divergent one company was from another. One catalog from each company was selected for the discussion. In the course of a few years a company would add and drop titles, but no attempt was made to show how the holdings of the companies changed.

The largest distributors in the country in the 1960s and '70s didn't go out of their way to handle unusual animated product. Films Incorporated just ended their film rental business and is now a video sales company. They used to rent features and shorts including MGM cartoons. They had exclusive rights to work from MGM, 20th Century Fox and other companies. At one time they had eight offices across the nation to better serve their customers.

Contemporary Films/McGraw Hill, founded around 1950, had a 384 page catalog in 1972. It included 20 films by Norman McLaren, a large selection from Zagreb, silhouette films by Lotte Reiniger, work by John Hubley, Jeff Hale, Jan Lenica, Alexander Alexeieff, Les Goldman, Halas and Batchelor, Ernest Pintoff, Karel Zeman, Jan Svankmajer, Jiri Trnka, and dozens of other animators from around the world. The McLaren films rented for $12.50 or $10. Most animated titles rented from $10 to $15.

The 16mm market for animated films is not dead, but it certainly has shrunk in size to the point that it is close to becoming an endangered species.

United Artists' UA16 catalog #5 (1975) focused on the distribution of features, but it did devote space to early Warner Bros. cartoons (1930 - 1948), the Fleischer *Popeye* cartoons, *Woody Woodpecker* (Lantz) and the *Pink Panther* series. Most of their cartoons were available packaged in groups of three for $25. Individual titles rented for $20 each and an 85 minute program called *The Popeye Follies* rented for $200.

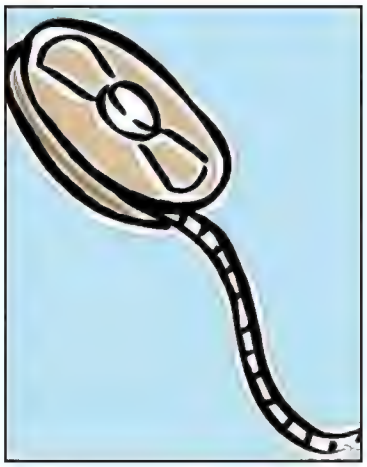
Another great selection was available from Ivy Film (NYC). They rented Paramount cartoons by the Fleischers (Betty Boop, Gabby, silent Koko, Color Classics and Screen Songs), the George Pal Puppetoons, and animation from Famous Studios. Cartoons were rented on a sliding scale based on the size of the audience. A Betty Boop rented in 1974 for $15 if the audience was under 100 people. The top rate was $35 for an audience of over 500 people.

Budget Films, founded in 1969, claimed to be "the biggest privately-owned film archive in the world." They have ended their participation in non-theatrical distribution and now provide stock footage to the industry. Their 1979 catalog

is 1 3/4" thick and contains over 800 pages. They rented vintage Hollywood cartoons from $5 - 10 each. Color Godzilla features rented for $32.50 and $34 and John Halas' *Animal Farm* rented for $37.50. In the 1980s they expanded their line to include a small selection of independent animated shorts. In 1989 they rented Jankovics' *Sisyphus* for $10, Steve Segal's *Red Ball Express* for $10, John Hubley's *The Hat* for $15, Frédéric Back's *Crac!* for $25 and Richard Condie's *The Big Snit* for $25. *Animal Farm* and the color Godzilla features were available for $50 each.

Small Companies Had Great Animation Collections

By the early 1970s there were several companies that specialized in experimental and independently produced films. Probably the most visible of these companies was Pyramid Films in Santa Monica. Their 1974 catalog was a slick 1/2" thick, 240 page volume. It listed films by Jordan Belson, Charles Braverman, George Dunning, Oskar Fischinger, John and Faith Hubley, Caroline Leaf, Norman McLaren, Dan McLaughlin, Frank Mouris, John Whitney, Michael Whitney, Stan Vanderbeek, and other animators. Fischinger's *Composition in Blue* rented for $10 and sold for $100. The Oscar-winning *Frank Film* rented for $15 and sold for $150. Pyramid is still in business, but the nature of their business has changed considerably in recent years.



The above sales prices date from before the Hunt family in Texas tried to corner the silver market in the 1980s. They drove the price of silver up to record highs, resulting in Kodak almost doubling the price of film stocks. When the price of silver finally fell, Kodak's prices didn't. When Kodak took all of the silver out of their film stocks, the prices still remained steady and have since gone up. Needless to say, the lab cost of a 16mm print in the 1970s was considerably less than it is today.

Working out of her home in Berkeley, California, Freude Bartlett opened Serious Business in the mid-1970s. The preface to her 1976 catalog said, "We are committed to film as an art form and our collection includes experimental and documentary work... The independent filmmaker is an artist, reflecting and commenting on the world and its meanings." She offered films by Scott Bartlett, Mary Beams, Stephen Beck, Adam Beckett, Robert Breer, Sally Cruikshank, Ed Emshwiller, George Griffin, Suzan Pitt Kraning, Pat O'Neill, Kathy Rose, Stan Vanderbeek and other artists. George Griffin's one-minute long *Trickfilm* rented for $5 and sold for $35 while his 4 1/2 minute *The Club* rented for $10 and sold for $100. Pat O'Neill's *Saugus Series* (18 min.) rented for $25 and sold for $250. The company grew for several years, but went out of business around 1980.

When Serious Business closed many of the animators represented by Freude signed contracts with Ron Epple's Picture Start. The company issued catalog #1 in 1981. It listed animated work by Jane Aaron, Karen Aqua, Skip Battaglia, Robert Breer, John Canemaker, Vince Collins, Sally Cruikshank, Larry Cuba, Paul Demeyer, Geoff Dunbar, David Ehrlich, Paul Glabicki, John and Faith Hubley, Flip Johnson, Norman McLaren, Suzan Pitt, Gary Schwartz, Maureen Selwood, Henry Selick, Stan VanderBeek, and dozens of other artists. Their rental and sales prices were similar to those of Serious Business and the company is no longer in business.

If a company's income declines, at some point it just doesn't make sense to continue running a business no matter how much the owner of the company loves film.

Years ago I asked Sally Cruikshank about her non-theatrical distributors. She said that considering her work was short and that there was not a great demand for animated shorts on television or in theaters before features, she was quite pleased with the size of the checks she had gotten from Serious Business and Picture Start. She indicated the checks were never for enormous sums, but her income from her films was several thousand dollars a year.

There were other companies with interesting animation collections as well. Creative Film Society was founded by Bob Pike in 1957.

The 1975 catalog offered work by Scott Bartlett, Jordan Belson, Oskar Fischinger, Len Lye, Pat O'Neill, James and John Whitney, John Hubley, the Fleischer Studio, Ernest Pintoff, and others. Pike died in 1974. His wife Angie runs the company from her home near Los Angeles.

Two important supporters of independent animation have been the late Charles Samu who imported outstanding animation from Eastern Europe, and Prescott Wright who runs Filmwright in San Francisco. Wright produced and distributed *The Tournee of Animation* from 1970 - 1986. He also rented individual animated titles, produced a few animated works, and is presently active in animation as a teacher, producer and consultant to the industry. In the 1970s he worked with Sheldon Renan to produce *The International Animation Festival*, a television series which aired on public television for three seasons.

Another important figure in 16mm distribution was Bernice Coe who founded Coe Film in 1971. Her main activity was to provide television broadcasters with short films. She began by producing packages of shows for cable television. At one time she had the television rights to thousands of films. Before she retired she helped place dozens of animated films by American independent animators on cable television.

There are other types of distributors that made/make animation available including several film co-ops (Canyon Cinema is alive and well in San Francisco) and university film libraries that rent and/or sell films. Berkeley's Extension Media Center continues to acquire works. One of their best selling titles in the 1990s has been Pat Amlin's *Popul Vuh*, an animated hour long work available on film and tape.

The Decline Of 16mm Film Distribution

The 16mm market for animated films is not dead, but it certainly has shrunk in size to the point that it is close to becoming an endangered species. There are several reasons why distribution of 16mm film has declined.

The first blow to the industry was the termination (about 1969) of government-funded programs that enabled school districts to buy audio visual materials. The funds for visual literacy in the early '60s fueled the rapid rise of independent film. With this subsidy for the arts gone, the industry slowly decayed.

In the 1980s the rise of distribution of films on video tape coupled with the rise of film stock prices had an adverse effect on the industry. For most consumers it no longer made sense to spend a great deal to buy a 16mm print of a work when a video copy was available for less. At first distributors tried to keep video prices high enough so they could continue to earn a profit similar to the income produced through film sales and rentals. Eventually video prices had to be cut to be competitive with companies selling tapes at mass market prices. You can still find rare material for sale on tape in the $50 to $100 range, but do these tapes sell well? The introduction of tape also changed America's viewing habits resulting in the decline of ticket sales at art houses.

Another problem in recent years has been the rising cost of doing business. It costs thousands of dollars to produce and distribute a large heavy sales catalog. Printing and mailing prices have gone up over the years. If a company's income declines, at some point it just doesn't make sense to continue running a business no matter how much the owner of the company loves film.

Note the online version of this article is supplemented by a directory of U.S. companies still offering 16mm films for rental and sale, as well as currently acquiring film distributors. Link to the Animation World Network Vault for complete contact information for these companies. http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.10/2.10pages/2.10cohen.html

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Karl Cohen is President of ASIFA-San Francisco. His first book, Forbidden Animation: Censored Cartoons and Blacklisted Animators, *has recently been published by McFarland Publishers. He also teaches animation history at San Francisco State University.*

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

A Literary Draw: Storyopolis

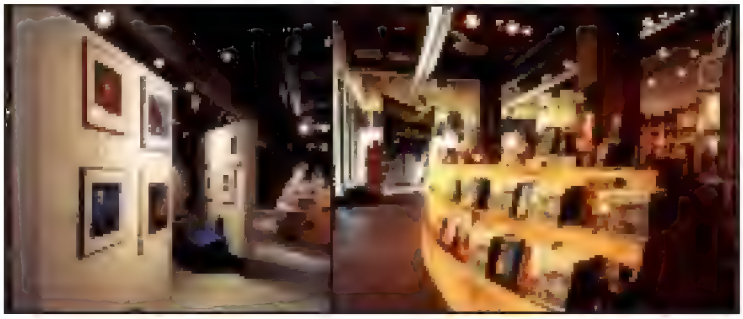
An Interview with Storyopolis Co-founder Fonda Snyder

by Wendy Jackson

In recent years, books have been the fodder for a herd of animated series and films. The past five years alone have brought us animated adaptations of literary works, other than comics, from authors such as Roald Dahl (*James and the Giant Peach*), Victor Hugo (*The Hunchback of Notre Dame*), Kenneth Grahame (*The Wind in the Willows*), Astrid Lindgren (*Pippi Longstocking*), Jean & Laurent deBrunhoff (*Babar*), Else Holmelund Minarik (*Little Bear*) and most recently, Marc Brown (*Arthur*), Paulette Bourgeois (*Franklin*), A.A. Milne (*Winnie the Pooh*) and William Joyce (*Rolie Polie Olie*). These days it is widely recommended that startups first pursue publishing a book or comic to establish an original property before trying to pitch it as an animated concept.

As the trend towards creator-driven content is catching on in the animation industry, an intrepid, relatively new player is entering the field, literally armed with shelves of original book properties. Storyopolis, a multi-faceted company that started as a concept to showcase art by children's book illustrators, was founded in December 1994 with the financial backing of Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, and the creative vision of founding principals Dawn Heinrichs and Fonda Snyder. A symbiosis of a bookstore, art gallery, artists' management company, development think tank and production company, Storyopolis bridges both publishing and visual media.

Storyopolis' production arm currently has a first-look deal with Warner Bros. where they are producing three features including a live-action adaptation of Steve Seagle's best-selling comic book *House of Secrets*, and two animated movies. The *Iguana Brothers*, is an animated feature based on the book by Tony Johnston and Marc Teague, and is described as a road movie featuring two iguanas who travel to Rio for Carnivale. *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* is based on Nancy Willard's female version of the classic story. For this film Storyopolis is partnered with Geena Davis, who is attached to voice the main character.



The Storyopolis Art Gallery and Bookstore provides a unique dialogue with the company's target audience and serves as a built-in testing and research center. Recent exhibitions include art by Tim Burton, Quentin Blake, William Joyce and Maira Kalman. © Storyopolis.

Ultimately, we are hoping to encourage kids to go back to the book and read for themselves after viewing the material we produce. - Fonda Snyder

Other Storyopolis projects in development include a live-action/computer animation feature Red *Ranger Came Calling*, a "'90s style Christmas story" based on a children's book by cartoonist Pulitzer Prize-winning Berkeley Breathed (*Bloom County*) and *Sign of the Seahorse*, an underwater action adventure based on the book by Graeme Base. *Gracie Graves and the Kids From Room 402* is an animated television series based on the book by Mickey & Betty Paraskevas, which is being developed for Fox Kids Worldwide, and is described as "*Seinfeld* for third-graders."

I spoke to Fonda Snyder who heads up Storyopolis Productions to shed some light on the process of developing children's books into film and television properties.

Wendy Jackson: What is the mission of Storyopolis' production arm?

Fonda Snyder: The promotion of literacy is very important to Storyopolis. Most of our projects are based on books because not only is it our primary business to sell both illustrated storybooks and the original art from those books, but it is also proven that in this electronic age, children and adults are more likely to read a book that they have seen adapted to film or television. Fortunately or unfortunately, a visual adaptation is more likely to reach the largest audiences. Even an author with the highest renown like Maurice Sendak has been said to comment that in a lifetime of touring and reading to audiences, he would still not be able to reach the number of children that a television

series does.

Children are so visually sophisticated these days and yet they will always be affected by heartfelt human interaction. We strive to transcend generations by creating truly clever, interesting, unique and intelligent material with a strong sense of humor, avoiding cliché and saccharine emotion. Ultimately, we are hoping to encourage kids to go back to the book and read for themselves after viewing the material we produce.

WJ: There are thousands of books out there. Why do some lend themselves to series or feature development? What do you look for?

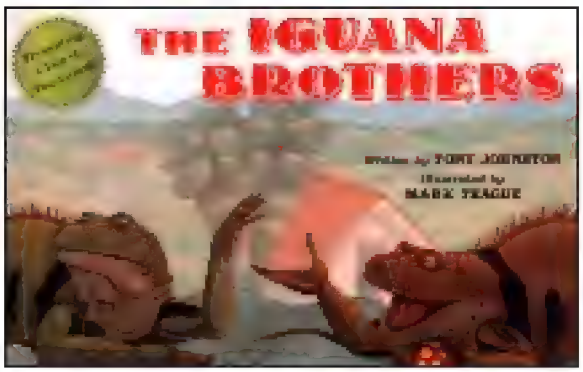
FS: Story! Storyopolis was created as a city of stories, and as such acquires franchise-oriented properties with strong stories, dynamic visuals, a great sense of humor and a "slightly tilted" sensibility that will entertain a sophisticated and fun-seeking audience of all ages. We are especially attracted to the classics, myths, fairytales and fables. The Art Gallery and Bookstore, which provides a unique dialogue with the company's target audience, serves as our own built-in testing and research center.

WJ: How do you go about optioning and developing books?

FS: My partner Dawn Heinrichs, who runs the gallery/bookstore and the overall business side of Storyopolis, constantly combs the world to find the best in illustrated works. Because of our unique setup and the research and development center at Storyopolis, we tend to have our pick of material far in advance of other producers and buyers. We often find that we discuss ideas with our authors and artists sometimes in advance of them writing the material and have a hand in encouraging them to work on a property that we will ultimately produce.

Thus, our business is reliant upon our close relationship with our authors and artists. We have very strong and special relationships with the authors and artists whose work we exhibit. Often we utilize these relationships when deciding what material to option.

We also work the traditional route. Our development person and I seek out the estates and/or publisher and/or agent to find who owns a property that has either recently been reviewed or that we have been intrigued in from our own travels through the myriad of book publishing trades and from history. There are many books and characters that I remember from my own childhood that we have sought out to develop.



The Iguana Brothers, a tale of two lizards by Tony Johnston, with illustrations by Mark Teague. © Scholastic Inc.

WJ: Can you take us through the steps of a project?

FS: One example of an ideal property for us is Berkeley Breathed's book, *Red Ranger Came Calling.* We were extremely lucky to outbid our competitors for the rights to the book and to work with an extraordinary artist who thoroughly understands and has studied and mastered the

Red Ranger Came Calling by Berkeley Breathed. © Little, Brown.

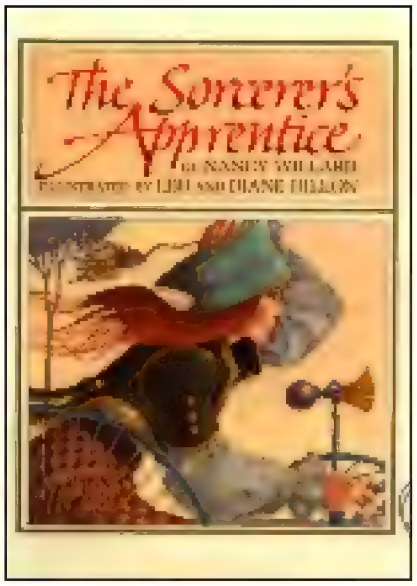
craft of screenwriting. The book was actually written in three acts with the film adaptation in mind. As a cartoonist and writer, Berkeley fully understood and embraced the demands of both mediums and was able to switch between the two, allowing for the very disparate needs of each. As a screenwriter, he was essentially storyboarding the script before and during writing. He wrote very much like a director because of the strength of his experience with the comic strips (*Bloom County*) and his love of film.

Children are so visually sophisticated these days and yet they will always be affected by heartfelt human interaction. -Fonda Snyder

WJ: What about stories? Do you develop new storylines and characters to expand a property for more content?

FS: It depends on the specific property. Some projects come with a fully developed storyline while others come with a wonderful idea or premise that needs to be fleshed out before it can become a successful TV or feature film project. It is very rare that a children's book will

be written in three acts. It is rarer still to find a children's book that is appropriate in its entirety to adapt for film. Often there will be a great concept, a world established with fun characters or a public domain title with a contemporary twist that is always a hot commodity if cleverly adapted. It is almost guaranteed that there will have to be a great deal of flexibility with the creator to accommodate its adaptation into another medium. It is inherent that a children's book especially will have to be expanded and characters further developed when taking it to another form.



The Sorcerer's Apprentice by Nancy Willard, with illustrations by Leo and Diane Dillon. © Scholastic Inc.

WJ: What are some of the qualities of a book property that lends itself to animation, as opposed to live-action?

Our core business is reliant upon our close relationship with our authors and artists. - Fonda Snyder

FS: I believe the line between the two is actually becoming more and more blurred. Animation is moving into many fascinating new territories as of late, with *The Prince of Egypt, Anastasia, The Iron Giant, Antz* and effects-driven live-action movies like *Babe, Men in Black* and others. Many stories that would never have been thought of for animation are now being successfully executed and many films that might only have been considered for animation are being done in live-action.

WJ: What is your working relationship like with book illustrators and authors? Do you just buy the rights and take it from there, or are the creators involved in development and production?

FS: The very nature of Storyopolis provides for an especially artist-friendly environment. We work together with each author and/or illustrator to bring their project to life on the screen. It is important that the artist's vision be kept alive in all stages of development so that the end result is truly representative of their vision. We work extremely closely with the authors and illustrators to maintain their intent and to keep a close watch on quality control.

Sometimes an artist or author does not want to be involved in the writing of a film or television series and then we will create the best team of talent that shares the similar intent and sensibility so that we can closely equate the underlying property as it serves us and the creators.

WJ: How do you work with a large studio like Warner Bros.? What is Storyopolis' role in the various stages of production?

FS: It is both challenging and exciting to have a relationship with a powerhouse studio such as Warner Bros. The resources and support they provide have proved invaluable. As a producer with a first look deal, we are responsible for bringing quality material to Warner Bros. that we believe in.

We are also careful not to take a property in that might not be developed appropriately enough. I have worked in the studio system for years and I am very aware of the parameters of the studio system and what needs to be created for presentation to executives. We will often option the material first and develop it to the point we believe it will be salable to the studio and then pitch it when we know that there is enough. We have also commissioned the writer to write a screenplay before submitting it to buyers. To ensure that the project is moving forward at Warner Bros., we work with one executive on the live-action side and one on the animation side.

As a producer, our role is to run interference to smoothly manage a project from inception and option, negotiations, through development and production. We are involved in every step of developing and managing a project until it appears on screen.

Storyopolis' bookstore is located at 116 North Robertson Blvd. in Los Angeles (between Third St. and Beverly Blvd.). For information call (310) 358 2500.

Wendy Jackson is Associate Editor of Animation World Magazine.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

Liquid Light Studios Says, "Olé!" to Mexico's *Pronto*

by Julie Pesusich

How would it be to work for yourself? Being in a company with no set schedule, no power-crazed executives, no ties or pantyhose in the dress code, no hierarchy; a company that would combine the talents of young individuals, working with friends who share the same passion and simply do what they're best at - creating. These were the thoughts that led to the creation of Liquid Light Studios (LLS).

Here's how we began on a little less than a shoestring...

The Beginning

Liquid Light Studios was started less than two years ago by Steve Brinca who comes from a fine art background. After working as a freelancer within the industry and being exposed to the corporate world, Brinca was inspired to create an open-minded environment where breaking the rules was expected. "After being exposed to the world of computers and seeing that they were not just programming machines, and realizing that you could actually draw and paint with them, I was immediately hooked," explains Brinca.

Good luck and good work brought projects to Liquid Light Studios like Hanna-Barbera's *Jonny Quest* and logos for WB Kids! and E! Entertainment Television. As a new company, the budget did not allow for marketing or advertising. The projects came strictly from word-of-mouth, so the company did encounter slow times. The roller-coaster cycle of great gigs and dry spells continued, fueling our determination.

But getting this short film started wasn't easy.

Shortly after, I joined the team as a partner and fellow risk-taker. At the time, I was working for a corporation where I was desiring to be in a more creative environment. Although I knew nothing about the CG industry, I did have a business/sales background that was complimentary to the creative talents already at Liquid Light. I learned what I needed to know about the computer graphics world quick! While production was in the hands of Steve and animator Adam Zepeda, I was responsible for making us known throughout the industry and relieving us from further dry-spells.

Our equipment at the time included two 8500 Macs that were running Electric Image. (We currently run 3D Studio Max on NT workstations.) All profits went back into the company on upgrading computers, software, etc. Sacrifice became automatic.

Enter Jorge

Jorge Ramirez-Suarez has made great strides in his brief career. After graduating from The National Film School in Mexico City, he had the chance to work as a second assistant director on a feature film.

The main character's dilapidated shack in Pronto Saldremos del Problema. Image courtesy of Liquid Light Studios. © 1997 IMCINE.

Director Jorge Ramirez-Suarez with a sculpted clay head used in the design of the computer generated character, Fatso. Image courtesy of Liquid Light Studios. © 1997 IMCINE.

When the first assistant was fired, Jorge took that position. In 1990, he produced *La Mujer De Benjami* and also wrote and directed the award winning 16mm short film *Pablo Y El Video*, which won the Jury Prize at the International Festival of Film Schools. In 1991, he directed the second unit of Alfonso Arau's *Like Water For Chocolate*. Later that same year, Jorge was selected to direct the first 35mm thesis, *No Quiero Discutir*, which was the first student project ever sold to Mexican television.

When Jorge asked Liquid Light Studios to do the full production on his short film *Pronto Saldremos del Problema*, we were very excited for many reasons. We had worked with Jorge before, and we really like him and respect his work. We also have a lot in common in that we are both young, focused and determined. This film really ties us together in the sense that it helps us both get another step closer to fulfilling our dreams.

The Story of Pronto

Pronto Saldremos del Problema (*Our Problems Will Soon Be Over*) is based on the struggle for survival between a fly and a man (Fatso) who lives within the impoverished areas of Mexico City. The man wants to kill the fly, not just because the fly is annoying, but because he has nothing else to eat. "I wanted to make a film about hunger," says Jorge, "Fatso and the fly are both looking for food, and the reason Fatso eats flies is because there is no food in the country. The people are starving but the media says that there is no problem."

Jorge is best known for his live-action films, but when the idea for *Pronto*, a metaphor for the current Mexican economic crisis, was born, he knew this was a project that could only be accomplished using computer animation.

Getting Pronto Started

When the Mexican short animated film, *El Heroe*, won the Palm d'Or at Cannes in the short film division in 1994, The Mexican Film Institute (IMCINE) started to support more animation and experimental short films. With this new attitude, IMCINE started a contest that now takes place every year. "My short film, *Pronto Saldremos del Problema*, was one of the winners from more than 600 entries, but the prize itself did not secure production," explains Jorge. IMCINE gave Jorge a grant that equated to less than 50% of the budget, and that was if he had shot it in Mexico. "The issue here was that I wanted to make *Pronto* in CG and there are not many animation studios in Mexico with powerful workstations. My option was to shop for an animation house outside of Mexico, which meant I had even less money for the film I wanted to make," Jorge adds.

But getting this short film started wasn't easy. "Financing a project is the most difficult part of any production," says Jorge. "It took a lot of time to convince the executives at IMCINE to get the green light to make a short, CG film out of the country and with a few bucks

A scene from Pronto Saldremos del Problema featuring the fully-rendered character of Fatso. Image courtesy of Liquid Light Studios © 1997 IMCINE.

in my hands. If they see it's potential as a short film, they will support it. IMCINE itself will distribute *Pronto* all over the world. I have produced at least four films for IMCINE, so they have confidence in this project."

Another attractive factor for both Jorge and Liquid Light Studios is that Pronto has been pre-selected to premier at The Cannes Film Festival, among others.

Jorge and Liquid Light Studios Connect

Once financing was secured, Jorge convinced Pablo Baksht, Head of Production at IMCINE, to produce the short film in Los Angeles. With his background in live-action film, Jorge did not know anything about platforms, software or rendering needs. After going to a lot of animation shops and checking different software, he decided to make *Pronto* with 3D StudioMax. "I took a course on 3D StudioMax, learned the basics, started to unite a team," he recalls, "First, I asked Mauricio Castillo, a Mexican artist, to design Fatso and the fly. Then I asked my friend David Hayes at E-Film if I could have their help transferring data to 35mm negatives, and he said yes. Soon, Martin Lazzarini joined to do the rest of the artwork and the storyboard." After some research, Jorge found Liquid Light Studios and with them the rest of the team.

Aside from the strong story content, Liquid Light Studios found the level of creative freedom that *Pronto* allowed very appealing. "Jorge is very open-minded and he supports our creative input," enthuses Zepeda. "This production is quite a team effort."

Constantly traveling between Mexico City and Los Angeles, Jorge brings photos of dilapidated neighborhoods and sketches of furnishings as source material for the crew here at LLS. We custom-model and texture every object. Michel Mazza, LLS's texture artist, has created textures for all the environments as well as those of the main characters, including small details such as pupils and tiny hairs. "We are also spending a lot of time on lighting and detail to create the right mood; the entire piece is very stylized," notes Al York, LLS's lighting director.

Another attractive factor for both Jorge and Liquid Light Studios is that *Pronto* has been pre-selected to premier at The Cannes Film Festival, among others.

Production Resources

Having the right resources was essential in order to produce the look that was en-visioned for *Pronto*. With 3D Studio Max as our main software, we relied on many plug-ins, as well as the manufacturers themselves, to successfully accomplish this production. Character animators Don Waters and John Burnett use Character Studio from Kinetix, along with 2nd Nature's HyperMatter and Digimation's Bones Pro as the main animation software for the characters, with Lambsoft's Smirk to aid in all of the facial animations. When working with characters, replicating actual life-like movements can be tricky. Both Don and John's background in traditional animation have proven valuable.

Working with a low budget could have hindered us from making this film, but we were extremely fortunate to have support from software companies. Kinetix, Digimation, Lambsoft, Sven Technologies, REM/Infografica, 2nd Nature and 4D Vision have all contributed to *Pronto's* success. Whenever a need, problem or question arose, these companies were there to help us out. Building strong relationships is no secret to success. We value the relations that we have built with the companies who produce the tools we need to exist.

Valuable Lessons

Although Liquid Light has been in business only a year and a half, many valuable lessons have been learned. Brinca says, "We have proven to ourselves that hard-work and persistence does pay off. We work an average of 14 hours a day, more when in production, but it's great when you're doing what you love." Taking the time to explain 3-D to clients who are not familiar with the process is imperative to having a project flow smoothly. We have devised our own samples of how every element of production works, and relates to one another. It's important for the client to understand what's involved in our job, this way if new project material is added, or new requests are made, the client will have an idea of what's possible to accomplish within their deadline and budget.

With 3D Studio Max as our main software, we relied on many plug-ins, as well as the manufacturers themselves, to successfully accomplish this production.

Beyond Production

After production for *Pronto* is completed, the sound will be posted and the final composite print will be made. For this area of post, Jorge has chosen Dan Fort, a talented editor who has worked on major feature films like *Desperado*

and *From Dusk 'til Dawn.* Fort is also responsible for the sound design of the fly's buzzes. The score has been composed by Eduardo Gamboa, a very well known Mexican composer. To do the final sound mix, Jorge has lined up the Dolby Digital Sound Studio at Churubusco Studios in Mexico. "The quality of the sound will have the top technology available today for big films," Jorge excitedly says.

Going the Extra Mile

We've worked on projects where the client was very happy with the final product (that was built from their storyboards), but we knew it could have been better. In one particular case, we made subtle changes to the color palette, font, and lighting. We slightly altered the design to compliment their product. We made these suggestions during production, but the client was adamant about staying with the original elements so we gave them their version that was already approved, along with our version for them to consider. It turned out they aired our version and thanked us for our work and insight.

"We need our clients as much as they need us." - Steve Brinca

An example of what sets us apart from other houses is that we give the client more than expected, and in some cases, more than they pay for. We recently created a new roller coaster for Six Flags Magic Mountain. The piece was two minutes of animation and the client mentioned at the beginning of production that they wanted to incorporate their logo at the intro.

Knowing the project was a lot of work and that we were faced with a tight deadline, the client never mentioned the logo again. We knew that an intro that was more than just inserting a logo would really make this piece, so we designed an intro as well as an ending with audio and surprised them with it. Needless to say, they were very surprised and thrilled. We worked an extra three days for free because we knew the extra work would make this project great. As a young house these are the types of extras that we have to do in order to make a name for ourselves and build a future. If we are to make it big, we are still going to uphold our small house beliefs.

"Every one of our clients and projects becomes a part of Liquid Light. We don't run our studio using the 'revolving door method' of bringing projects in and getting them out as quickly as possible," concludes Brinca, "We need our clients as much as they need us."

Julie Pesusich is a partner, representative and director of Client Relations for Liquid Light Studios.

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Bonus HTML Features

Every online (HTML) issue of *Animation World Magazine* contains additional features not found in the download or print Acrobat version, such as Quicktime movies, links to Animation World Network sites, extended articles and special sections. Don't miss the following highlights that are showcased exclusively in this month's *Animation World Magazine* HTML version:

http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.10/2.10pages/2.10cover.html

- **The Unnatural History of Independent Animated Films on 16mm** is supplemented by a directory of U.S. companies still offering 16mm films for rental and sale, as well as currently acquiring film distributors. Visit the Animation World Network Vault for complete contact information for these companies.
- **The Creation of an Icon: MTV** includes a Quicktime movie of the first animated MTV id.
- **Experimental vs. Narrative Films: Do You Have to Choose?** Includes Quicktime movies of experimental and narrative student films.
- ***One Divided By Two:* An Emotional Equation** includes a Quicktime movie from the short film by Joyce Borenstein.
- **Web Animation Explosion: Headache Relief** includes samples of Shockwave and GIF animations that are available on the reviewed CD-ROM.

The Creation of an Icon: MTV

by Candy Kugel

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Editor's Note: When our September television issue took a special focus on MTV, we were surprised how often the MTV logo was mentioned. It was on this note that Candy Kugel felt inspired to write her memoirs on directing the first "Top of the Hour" and subsequent campaigns that opened the door for many independent animators.

On Friday, July 17th, 1981 at 10:30 a.m., I attended a meeting at our Perpetual Motion Pictures offices with prospective clients from a place called Warner AmEx who were going to start a Music Television channel. They needed a network id; something to identify their network from others, sort of like a modern CBS "eye." They had a half dozen chromes from NASA of the original walk on the moon, a logo designed by Frank Olinsky of Manhattan Design, a promise for a sound track the following week, and one week in which to complete it. I remember looking at the final logo design, the chunky, baby block 'M' and the dripping 'TV,' and feeling how great it was. Graffiti art had been celebrated for the previous decade, yet this was the first type treatment I'd seen that screamed, "Spray paint on a wall." It was totally asymmetrical, as far away from the peacock or an eye as you could get; a design that made the 'M' be off center, to allow for the 'TV' to be on screen. It was also MTV's intention of changing the look of the logo every time the viewer saw it. All that was constant, were the proportions and the desire for it to look as "hands on" as possible.

This was a time when everything was shot on film, and since this was to be some sort of double run, I needed to mat in the MTV logo which would be shot with top lights onto the NASA chromes (shot bottom). Please remember that this was before HARRY, Flame or even good video compositing. I needed to do daily tests which were then processed overnight at labs. In the end, I had less than three days to produce all the hand-colored, purposely made to look "funky" flags which were done on tissue paper with watercolor markers.

But, let's step back for a minute. How did this come about and why was I doing this seminal work at MTV?

The NewYork Dichotomy

In the late 1970s there were two distinct groups doing animation in New York: the studios who were primarily doing television commercials and the independents who were making films from grant money. The independents generally came from art schools and film schools that had animation departments which propelled them into the world of film grants and teaching. The studio animators generally came from a tradition of apprenticeship. From the beginning I straddled both worlds. I had been a student at Rhode Island School of Design, heard a lecture by Jack Zander at Brown University and asked him for a job. During art school, I worked as an intern over summers and vacations at Perpetual Motion Pictures, a commercial studio owned by Buzz Potamkin and Hal Silvermintz. Therefore, I could learn my craft on the job, while having enough time to experiment independently while at school. RISD gave me a janitorial closet as my "room" and paid for their first animation disk and pegs which I bought before the film/animation/video department existed as it does today. I always wanted to do my own work, but the economics made it necessary for me to work commercially. I was very lucky. The first five years that I worked at Perpetual Motion Pictures, I had the opportunity to make dozens of one

minute "editorial cartoons" for the monthly NBC news show, *Weekend*. I've always said that NBC paid for my animation education. As the pieces got more involved and complicated, the more experience I gained.

Ever since its inception, animation was combined with live-action to intensify its magic, contrast it with reality, show fantasy...

By 1978 I was a member of several, often mutually exclusive, organizations: I was a member of Screen Cartoonist Local 841 (the IATSE affiliate that insured animation workers of a minimum wage, unemployment insurance, vacation, holiday and severance pay, health and retirement benefits), the Union Animators' Group (made up of journeymen animators who thought the union as a whole underrepresented their needs and concerns), ASIFA-East, and George Griffin's group of independent animators (a group that felt that ASIFA didn't represent them, and used this monthly meeting as an opportunity to show works in progress and compare notes). I was an inveterate animation festival goer. I felt that I was an independent animator and found the freedom in independent film exhilarating. When I'd report to the Union Animators' Group about the films I'd seen, many would snort at the idea of moving sand or string under a camera and calling it art. When I'd try to rally the independents into thinking about unity as a protection against unfair labor practices, that joining the Union could possibly protect them, I'd get a similar jeer.

All this to say, that I was one of the few commercial animators to be present at the 1978 Ottawa Film Festival. I was actually there with the short *Fat Farm,* one of the *Weekend* pieces, which I directed, designed, animated and co-wrote. We wrote the pieces by committee at "story meetings" from which I would create a storyboard. For this film, I was uncredited and my way unpaid, but what a festival! Caroline Leaf presented her sand version of *Metamorphosis*, a tour-de-force of storytelling, Kathy Rose's *Pencil Booklings* where she had rotoscoped herself to be among her characters, *La Traversee de l'Atlantique a la Rame*, an incredible cut-out metaphor of marriage by Jean-Francois Laguionie, Sara Petty's *Furies*, with its beautiful color pencil drawings of cats and George Griffin's *Viewmaster*, an homage to Eadweard Muybridge. Work by Janet Perlman, Al Jarnow, Jimmy Picker, John Weldon and others was also screened. Five nights of screenings with work so varied in texture, tone and technique, it made one feel like film could look like or be anything. Many of them were done by women which was a major difference from the commercial studios where women were often relegated to ink and paint! Although there were commercials presented, the overall interest was in the independent fiction films.

Playing with Live-Action Footage

I returned to New York ready to start working on my own film in my spare time. I had actually finished my first independent film in 1977; an homage to Saul Steinberg, who asked me not to show it until he had a chance to make his own animated film. (I'm still waiting....) This time however, I wanted to combine still photos and animation. Ever since its inception, animation was combined with live-action to intensify its magic, contrast it with reality, show fantasy, etc. In commercials, we always shot live-action film footage, rotoscoped what was necessary, then animated to the live and combined the animation film and live-action film in an optical. Needless to say, this was very expensive and time-consuming. Many independents were playing with live-action footage in a variety of experimental ways: with plain rotoscoping, as Kathy Rose, George Griffin and Mary Beams were doing, with stills, like Al Jarnow, and some were using Xeroxes pulled directly from 16mm film. I liked the way the motorized stills looked and decided to shoot myself as an actress preparing for an audition. *Audition* was finally finished in 1980, but the initial storyboard appeared in *Frames,* George Griffin's publication, in 1978.

The conditions were such that encouraged experimentation and play. Naturally, I was full of ideas...

Within the year the *Weekend* show was canceled and my creative autonomy came to an end. It was at this point that I got to develop as a character animator because Perpetual Motion started doing half-hour television specials. It was liberating being able to make the characters act without worrying about the design or layout. However, I began to miss directing and designing, so Buzz Potamkin and I struck a deal. He would offer me the commercials that came in that didn't require a given designer, or that Hal Silvermintz was too busy to handle. So, I was animating a few scenes in *Strawberry Shortcake in Big Apple City* during the Spring of 1981, and was laying

out and directing some Sunshine Baker and Aziza eye makeup ads, when a rush spot came in, in March.

A Taste of Things to Come

Dale Pon, who had just started his own advertising agency specializing in radio stations, had a client in San Francisco. This particular spot involved two DJs, Frank and Mike, and it was Dale's idea that we make them into celebrities. He wanted to have them in tuxedos, exiting a limousine, waving to a crowd of chanting fans, and entering a theater where they would be sipping champagne with famous singers. Now the last shot, Frank and Mike with the celebrities, wasn't a big deal. It could be shot very simply against a limbo background with the celebrity making the most interesting performance. But the crowds? The limo? There were plenty of 16mm archive houses around with footage of Hollywood openings, but if we were to go the traditional route and try to mat them in, it would have been weeks of testing in the lab and then trying to match the DJ's in a similar lighting and perspective. I'd been aching to try a new machine that Xerox was touting. One could bring 16mm film and they would continuously print it on paper. The machine was used for microfilm. So, we cut together a 16mm workprint with four or five shots of different film openings, different perspectives of crowds and theaters, day, night... It didn't matter since it would all be re-treated. We then took Xerox the footage.

The famous "moonwalk" MTV id. © MTV: Music Television.

Dale was going to California to shoot the DJs and I gave him a couple of drawings of positions that I needed the guys to walk in. He had a still photographer shoot them for me. They were shot without a motorized camera which gives it an even funkier look. Buzz got an okay from his uncle, and I went over to Potamkin Cadillac to shoot both the exterior and interior of a Cadillac limousine. Then we played with it. To fool the viewer into thinking that the crowds were all part of the same scene, we used marker and colored pencils to destroy any extraneous information and to use the palette to flatten the live and unite it. We Xeroxed the two dozen or so photos of the DJs on cel and painted them to separate them more clearly from the crowds and backgrounds. All that patchke added excitement to the piece. Everyone was delighted with the results and it was done in a very quick turn around time. Part of the challenge of the job did indeed come from time and budget constraints, but had I not seen other animated pieces using this Xerox technology, notably from NYU students, I don't think I would have used archival footage.

I could only say, "It's not going to be like anything else you've seen before," which seemed to satisfy him.

The Top of the Hour

This spot caught the attention of Fred Seibert who then contacted Buzz to do the "Top of the Hour" for his new Music Television network. He liked the hand drawn quality of the KNBR spot and needed that for the NASA chromes. He definitely wanted his audience to understand that this was not a puff piece for astronauts. He wanted irreverent, eye catching, funky and fast! So began a relationship between Buzzco Productions, MTV and Dale Pon. Buzz had just formed Buzzco Productions, taking Vincent Cafarelli and myself as his creative team. Fred Seibert and Alan Goodman left MTV and formed their own company Fred/Alan, who shared the 28th floor with us above the Omni Park Central Hotel. Dale continued to bring us radio advertising and Fred/Alan and Buzzco produced a show for The Playboy Channel called *Hot Rocks*. It was an exciting time working with both companies since they wanted stuff that didn't look like anything else. The conditions were such that encouraged experimentation and play. Naturally, I was full of ideas I wanted to play with: collage, retiming live, changing palettes. Cable television was beginning to define what it was and used animation to separate itself from the networks.

"I Want My MTV!"

Sometime in 1983, Dale Pon, then a partner at LPG/PON, landed the MTV national advertising account. In the beginning of 1984, he came up with the "I Want My MTV" campaign. Nancy Podbilniak was the writer and George Lois the creative director. The idea was to take rock and roll icons and have them demand MTV from their cable service while interacting with the MTV logo, which had the ability to change into anything. We were going to film the stars delivering their line, "I Want My MTV," but what would happen afterwards was still to be deter-

mined. I remember sitting in a car going out to Queens for the first New York shoot, with Hall and Oates, Tom Freston, then the head of advertising at MTV, and Leslie Fenn, the account executive. Tom asked me what it was all going to look like. I was armed with some MTV logos I had blown up on cels and cut out to be used as props with Hall and Oates. This was a gag written by George Lois, that the rock partners would be arguing over whose MTV it was and inadvertently tear it. I knew we were going to use the live footage. I knew we were going to animate the 'M.' I knew we didn't want to use Xerox on the rock stars because we wanted too enhance their looks. Plus, I wasn't sure if we were going to layer effects onto the live-action or replace it. I could only say, "It's not going to be like anything else you've seen before," which seemed to satisfy him.

As they say, success has many parents. Failures are orphans.

How Did They Do That?

Now as to how the MTV spots got to look the way they did, I need to go back in history once again! Whenever we did a commercial that had live-action into which we were placing an animated character, we would have to rotoscope it. Sometimes, if there was no touching or cross over, we would get a single image of the scene as a photograph. At all optical houses at the time there was always an "art guy," someone who would set type, make kodaliths, mats, and these "projections." Our camera service, owned by John Rowohlt, had such a service: a man named Gerry Guidali. Kodak had come out with a new paper that was less expensive, lightweight and fast drying. We wondered what it would be like to get them into the series since it was better quality than Xerox but less expensive than photographic prints. I had used high quality photographic paper in my film *Audition* and the images took a long time to expose and dry. It would have been prohibitive to use in a campaign that would have hundreds of images and tight deadlines. We used an internegative with Bell and Howell perfs and devised a crosshair system to keep them in registry and voila! The photo-roto industry was born! Using the camera as a photographic enlarger, punching the actual paper and exposing large numbers of frames in sequence had a revolutionary effect on the business. Until very recently with the advent of computers, these photo-rotos made it possible to get precise roto-ing without having to have someone back-breakingly sit at an animation stand and trace by hand the live-action.

In the late '70s and early 80s there was a new interest in tinting photographs. Although color photography had long been perfected, the quaintness of turn of the century color tinting of black and white photos was refreshing. There was also an art movement coming out of Milan, Italy, Memphis Milano, with its squiggles and bright primary colors. It was fun to imagine the combination of influences and how a piece could turn out. So, that was my plan to get an even exposure on the live-action so that I could bring out contrast in the coloring. Using magic markers and grease pencils on the cels to give the photos a hand-colored quality (and rouge the stars' cheeks), I kept the MTV logo as a black outlined cartoon character of its own, using the Memphis Milano-type palette. The combination of the silliness of the logo gags (I was joined in animation by Vincent Cafarelli and Jan Svochak), the straight ahead constant motion of the color tinting on the live (the color was followed through by Cotty Kilbanks and Lisa Fernandez) and the brightly colored logo, made Dale Pon dub it, "Eye Candy (Kugel)."

That Famous Moon Shot

This all was noticed again by Fred/Alan who decided it was time to update MTV's "Top of the Hour." It had been about two and a half years that they'd been using the original funky slides; occasionally changing the live action blast off beginning, a change so subtle it was virtually unnoticed. Since the national campaign had become such a success and people started to refer to that as the "MTV look," they contracted us to create the moon landing in that same technique. Unfortunately, the NASA footage left a lot to be desired. It was shot on 16mm, very high contrast and in reality, pretty colorless. The takes took forever, unlike the snappy timing we could do with gags. Therefore, we were forced to piece it together from a couple of different moon walks.

In this case I was allowed great individual artistic freedom which is unusual if one is employed by someone else and answering to a corporate client.

Neil Lawrence and I cut a blow-up dupe of the footage together, timed to the MTV theme music. This time through there was also footage of Houston and tons of computer screens into which we could mat the logo. The palette had to change with the function of the

live-action, plus the sky was too black, we needed to break it up with sparkling stars. The rest of the high-contrast, out-of-focus footage had to be delineated in a way that the action could be read and could be fun. Magenta was added to aqua as the color of the astronauts' uniforms. Orange seemed an apt color for the surface of the moon and we enhanced the rockets' red flare.

Today, A Lot Has Changed

The MTV campaign continued through 1985, past Buzz's departure for Hollywood and Vincent Cafarelli, Marilyn Kraemer and myself starting Buzzco Associates. Over the years there have been plenty of people who have taken credit for the beginning of MTV. As they say, success has many parents. Failures are orphans. In the 16 years since its birth, I have found it curious that my name has rarely been linked with these early efforts, even though I designed and directed all of the spots. It's similar in a way to the sporadic and fluky crediting of animators in the old, big studios where the name of the actual animator or sequence director was sometimes forgotten. Somehow information gets lost in the shuffle of other people's reminisces of their own roles. In this case I was allowed great individual artistic freedom which is unusual if one is employed by someone else and answering to a corporate client. My only initial caveat being that whatever I did be "brand-new and cutting-edge;" that included the artistic influences of the time reinterpreted in a new way through interests and visions that were personally mine.

After our initial work on MTV, this crazy coloring style came into demand. We were asked to go further with it for other clients including HBO, USCI, VH-1, USA Network, more radio station spots for Dale Pon and the *Teen Wolf* opening and end titles for Buzz at Southern Star. For awhile there were lots of other studios using this technique. With the popularization of the Quantel Paintbox, the price of doing this directly to tape, without going through the film stage, made it seem totally pervasive. (Although I do prefer the hand drawn look with film images.) By 1987, we were much less interested in this particular style and were creating, *A Warm Reception in L.A.*, our first independent short in which we used neon colors against a stark black background. This became the new "Buzzco look." Again, we've done scores of projects in this technique which has also been imitated by others. (Actually, in *Audition* I had an entire sequence with colored pencils on black construction paper, a precursor! But then that's another story....)

I still go to international animation festivals and love to see how themes and styles seem to cross-pollinate in this atmosphere. I was so taken by the graphic style of *The Monk and the Fish* by Michael Dudok de Wit in Ottawa '94 that I ached to use a big black paintbrush in our next film which ended up being *The Ballad of Archie Foley*. I'm not sure that the average viewer could actually tell that, but I sure noticed the proliferation of dots on the generation of films after *His Wife the Hen* by Igor Kovalyov.

As for the state of the animation community in New York this last half of the '90s decade? There is no more dichotomy; no more intense rivalry between the independents and the union studios. Most independents do commercial work since grants have dried up considerably. There is no more union or union studios. In the mid-80s Local 841 got swallowed up by an indifferent Local 644, the camera union, which in turn, just last year, got swallowed up by the West Coast Local 600. Many studios and independents compete for the same work. In addition, many studios, even if they don't produce their own independent work, produce short pieces that compete in the international film scene. Here at Buzzco Associates, we try to produce enough income-generating work to allow us to keep making our own projects. Often, as in the case of the 30-minute direct to home video that we did for Planned Parenthood Federation of America, *Talking About Sex,* we get to produce income-generating productions that we can treat as an independent project. The best of both worlds!

Note: The online version of this article contains a Quicktime movie of the first animated MTV id. http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.10/2.10pages/2.10mtv.html

Candy Kugel.

Candy Kugel is vice president and animation director at Buzzco Associates, Inc. in New York City.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

Writing for Visual Effects: It's the Story

by Christopher Zack

Editor's Note: Even though Animation World Magazine *is located in Hollywood, California we don't often turn to the world of big, live-action blockbuster films. However, with visual effects becoming a larger and larger source of employment, we sent Christopher Zack on "retreat" to investigate how live-action writers are taking on a typically animated goal: writing the unreal. How is this changing their craft?*

*After quite a journey...Christopher spoke with Ron Shusset (*Alien, Total Recall*) about this question as well as the "state of the blockbuster" in U.S. cinema.*

The ad read, "Writing is more than a one night stand." Living in Los Angeles, you see this type of thing listed in the weekend section of the paper all the time. To attend this particular "Retreat," people paid anywhere from $250 to $500 apiece (depending on lodging) to spend the weekend in an isolated, scenic location, talking shop with the pros of the trade. I just had to take the trip to discover the place where a piece of literary wisdom had a $500 price tag attached. Although I had to wake my weary bones unusually early for a Saturday morning to take the trek west, and up the coast from my home in Hollywood, the breath of perfect sunshine through the window can sometimes be enough to rip one from the once-clutched sheets. It was a perfect day and I jumped in the Jeep with the top down.

The Adventure Begins

The three-day retreat was held at the Steve Brewer Conference Center. The directions gave an address in Malibu, and said the location of the conference center was near Zuma Beach, an oceanside community just northwest of Los Angeles. The conference center, in fact, ended up not being near Zuma at all, and definitely not in Malibu. The *second* group of firemen I talked to after driving around for an hour and a half deliberated, went over some road maps, and then explained to me that the Steve Brewer Conference Center was actually located in Ventura County, approximately 30 miles north of Zuma Beach.

I reached the location almost two hours late. This place was just outside of nowhere. Across from the tucked-away compound, groups of people in matching, white t-shirts and red, running shorts jumped out of a series of school buses and ran to the shore wildly yelling, disappearing into the ocean. Were these "the writers?" Was I about to have my first encounter with a troop of laptop wielding Branch-Davidians? I was soon happy to find out that my brief blast of paranoia was completely unjustified.

Was I about to have my first encounter with a troop of laptop wielding Branch-Davidians?

On "Retreat"

Gary Shusett, who was responsible for organizing the writer's retreat, set me up with a Mexican feast as soon as I arrived,

Alien: Resurrection is the fourth installment in the effects-heavy Alien series of films, the first of which began as a story by Ron Shusett, in a screenplay written by Dan O'Bannon. ©Twentieth Century Fox.

Starship Troopers was written by Ed Neumeier, based on a book by Robert A. Heinlein published in the 1950s. Neumeier worked closely with Phil Tippett (whose studio completed the bug effects), director Paul Verhoeven and producer Jon Davison in the development of the script. © Columbia Tristar Pictures.

making sure to let the rest of the seated lunchers know I was, "The writer from the magazine!" As the twenty or so heads turned, I recognized a couple of the faces attached to them: Shane Black (*Lethal Weapon, Last Boy Scout, Last Action Hero, Long Kiss Goodnight*), Daniel Yost (*Drugstore Cowboy*), and Gary's brother Ron Shusset (*Alien, Freejack, Total Recall*). I was the writer? I began to blush and momentarily lost all my cool. This is when I realized that there are three types of people that go to these conferences. The first is the serious writer or academic who doesn't necessarily have a hand in the film business, but would like to get in or learn more about it. Second are the desperate writers, truly in search of a twelve step program, not a writer's conference. And finally, the subtly-crazed fan. Not the kind that will stalk and kill Shane Black, but the kind that will see him, stare at him all day long, and then occasionally lean to the nearest person to spend ten minutes telling them what a genius he is, and how they spent the entire summer of 1987 rehearsing every Mel Gibson line in the first *Lethal Weapon.* Over the course of the day, I realized that

You have to have a better story. - Ron Shusset

I am a hybrid of all three.

As Shane Black spoke about the struggle of the process and the perils of becoming "a writer," I noticed a group of military-types struggling to climb a giant, fake rock wall just across the field from where we were sitting. Let me tell you, I had a moment. If you're not as familiar as you'd like to be with the process involved with being a professional screenwriter and thinking about checking out one of these retreats, the industry knowledge you will gain is well worth the money. If you're already wading you're way through the industry, but have yet to make that sale or get your first credit, a weekend like this will rejuvenate your belief in the craft of writing and yourself as having a purpose in life. I was enjoying my stay so much that I almost forgot what I had come to do.

In Ron Shusett's Words

So, after my "moment," and before the BBQ, it was time to corner Ron Shusett to discuss the fate of the screenwriter in an era of visual-effects driven films. Ron is a pleasant, lightning-tongued speaker with an immeasurable amount of passion and knowledge. He also doesn't seem nearly as insane as someone should who wrote a famous story about murderous aliens bursting out of the chests of innocent human beings.

Christopher Zack: Most of the blockbuster films of the past two years have been effects-driven movies. Do you think that the industry's obsession with these films is inhibiting the screenwriter or the screenwriting medium by altering the way a writer approaches the craft?

Ron Shusett: I think it already has, because they (the writers) don't care about getting the story right. They don't care if the story works, or if the characters are good or developed, just if it has a good concept like *Air Force One*. It might not even be an inventive one, but it's a suspenseful one. In *Con Air*, there were three different endings. They were all with lavish effects that had nothing to do with the story. That's why I think there were no Oscar nominations for any of the studios other than those for *Jerry Maguire*. They (the studios) encourage you to forget the craft of screenwriting and just do something that has a provocative or interesting premise.

And not even so much as that, but a premise that lends itself to suspense and special effects with action scenes stuck in. They (the studios) are encouraging people (writers) and even say, "We don't care because it's too hard to make an excellent movie, but we can make a mediocre movie if there's enough special effects in it and action." *Batman* is another example. Surely they could have worked harder on getting a good script to *Batman*, but they spent $150 million dollars on it, and that just went for effects.

I said, "Let's just write it as best as we can, forgetting cost, and we'll see what we have to cut out." - Ron Shusset

CZ: Do you think that this phenomena of lazy scriptwriting will continue, due to the increasingly wide use of digital imaging workstations such as The Flame that have completely revolutionized and simplified digital effects in film?

RS: I think there is going to be a slight cut back (on the use of effects), because *Batman* did $150 million less than the last *Batman.* They spent so much more on it. And *Con Air*, they expected to do $150 million (US box office) or $180 million, and it did $100 million. Plus, everyone was saying the story didn't work well enough.

CZ: But then you have your effects-driven successes of this summer like *Men In Black* and the *Jurassic Park* sequel, *The Lost World*. I'd say those are two reasons to say, "Hey, the special effects are working."

RS: Right...right, once in a while...but *Jurassic Park: The Lost World* was the sequel to *Jurassic Park* and *Men In Black* did have Speilberg's name attached. So they go, "Oh well, Spielberg maybe could do it. He's genius for what audiences like." But other effects-driven movies are not holding up as well, this whole summer, last summer even, where they did the same thing. I've read things, and I hope to God it's true, what they've (the studios) decided, it seems they're still going to do all these effects driven movies, because even the one's where the story didn't work, they made $100 million domestically and $200 million worldwide. Last year, the last *Batman* did $350 million worldwide. So I think they're not going to stop making those (effects-driven movies), because they didn't lose any money. There were twelve movies made last year that cost $100 million or more, including *Starship Troopers* and a couple other big ones. So, they're not going to stop making them, but they realize now you have to make them better. You have to have a better story.

CZ: Do you think that the surge in popularity of low-budget, indy films this past year (1997) has something to do with an attempt by the studios to find scripts with a combination of elaborate special effects *and* a good story?

RS: Yeah, because they (the studios) see the independents. They are jealous of them, all these excellent movies, lower cost and still making money.

CZ: When you wrote *Alien* , did you write it knowing that those special effects could be done?

RS: I knew exactly, because my partner Dan O'Bannon was specialized in special effects. He's an expert in it. He had done a small amount of work on *Star Wars* , which came out two years before *Alien*.. He also did this low budget film, in which he designed all the effects, which were his, created for his master's thesis in film at USC called *Dark Star*. It was so good that they (Roger Corman) gave him $60,000 dollars. That's all it took. I mean it cost him maybe $10,000 to make. Roger Corman expanded it and released it, but then that was 1977. I saw this movie and I thought, "Wow this guy designed the special effects?" I particularly went with somebody that would help me know (the special effects).

The writer is forced to write what will sell, so now they have become slavish. - Ron Shusset

CZ: Are you going to consult a special effects technician on your next project?

The Lost World, the sequel to Jurassic Park, featured a significantly larger slate of visual effects than the first film. © Universal.

RS: No. I wrote a script called *Rush To Atlantis* , but it took me three years to get it right because I couldn't get the story to work. Some other writer brought it to me, a friend of my wife's who I've worked on and off with for years. She brought me the concept, but it was so expensive. I said, "Let's just write it as best as we can, forgetting cost, and we'll see what we have to cut out."

CZ: When *Alien* was released, studios were catching up to create effects that would accommodate the writer's vision. Do you think today writers are struggling to catch up to the visual possibilities that the latest in special-effects have made possible?

RZ: *Independence Day,* some of it was very weak. Few of the special effects were good, because they limited their budget. They brought it in for $70 million because that guy (Roland Emmerich) wasn't that hot of a star and only gave 'em a medium size hit. He (Roland Emmerich) did some of it with outmoded effects too. A few of them (special effects) were excellent, maybe the size of the ship and so forth. They didn't have the budget to do what Spielberg or Lucas could and the story was so cliché. I heard everybody in the industry knock it, they said, "Oh, what a dumb movie," but if it made $700 million dollars it's hard to knock. *But* you could do an excellent movie for that and that's what bugs me. But alien movies, anything about UFOs, they (the studios) are in such excitement about them, especially getting near the millennium.

CZ: Do you think that some of the writers and directors out there are so intrigued by the use of visual effects technology that they lose their edge to curiosity?

RS: I think it's two things. The studios and the producers like Jerry Bruckheimer who say, "Just lay on the special effects and pray." I think that affects not directors so much as writers, because the writers are at their mercy. They're not a financeable element, a writer. They might hire you because you're a better writer, but they won't make a movie strictly because you're the writer. The writer is forced to write what will sell, so now they have become slavish. "Oh yeah, now I'll just throw on some special effects," and it gets sloppier in story. I don't think it affects the director. Directors do what they want artistically.

CZ: Do you think the use of digital effects like morphing are effective in comedy?

RS: *The Mask* was terrific but that was comedy and silliness. Yeah, I thought it was great but one of the few times I've ever liked it. I usually don't like Jim Carrey, and that was the only time I liked him, because it was so silly they were making fun of the effects. It was almost like *Roger Rabbit*. It was cartoon-like instead of effects that were believably done.

Christopher Zack is a Los Angeles-based freelance writer who has written for publications such as FilmZone *and* Crash Site.

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Experimental vs. Narrative Films: Do You Have to Choose?

compiled by Heather Kenyon

It often seems to students that in their final year of school they must choose between making a traditional, mainstream film in order to obtain a job, or a more experimental film through which they can speak in their own voice for perhaps a final time. Is there a middle ground? Which direction should they choose?

We asked a select group of educators to share their thoughts and advice on this dilemma that faces students. Amy Kravitz, Associate Professor at the Rhode Island School of Design (U.S.), Roger Noake of the Surrey Institute of Art and Design (U.K.) and Rolf Bächler from the Schools of Applied Art in both Zurich and Lucerne took up the challenge and responded. To illustrate the two sides of the issue, we are showcasing two recent student films from RISD.

Good work also means giving a film what the film needs; not what the filmmaker needs, not what the industry needs, not what an art museum needs. - Amy Kravitz

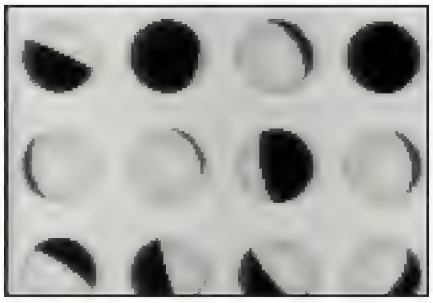
Amy Kravitz, Rhode Island School of Design (RISD)

"Should students create a mainstream film in order to get a job or should students create a film in their own voice? The answer to the question is simple. Students should do good work. Good work will receive recognition when it is screened.

"What is good work? Good work asks an original question and reaches an understanding of that question. It might answer the question. It might not. Let your aesthetic and intellectual interests guide you. If you are deeply engaged with traditional animation, study and practice those forms whole heartedly. If you are deeply engaged with experimental animation, experiment whole heartedly. Give your work content, whatever its form.

"Good work also means giving a film what the film needs; not what the filmmaker needs, not what the industry needs, not what an art museum needs. If you are proceeding according to formulae (it doesn't matter whose) you have stopped thinking, listening, and being visually aware.

"Now, the question I have just addressed leads to another question: Are animators trained or educated? That one is better left for another time."



1997 RISD graduate Ara Peterson created 12 Ball, a very compelling abstract film by animating black and white paint on a simple three-dimensional object. © 1997 Ara Peterson.

Roger Noake, The Surrey Institute of Art and Design

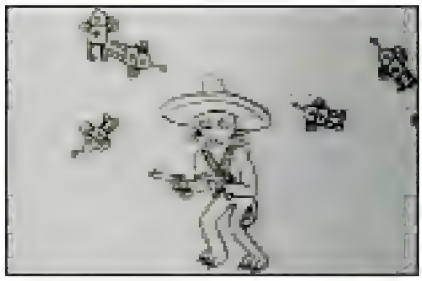
"The problem with how to pitch final projects for students, mainstream or personal, is complex in the U.K. The studio system tends to focus on commercials or series but there is a strong and successful sector which is based on Channel 4, BBC2 and Arts Council commissions. As broadcasting changes and the importance of ratings increases, the pressure is on these traditionally independent funders to look towards more mainstream animation. The dilemma is that without a tradition of "mainstream independent" broadcasting and with an unpredictable feature animation production industry, there is something of a hole in the talent pool, especially so in new technology.

The dilemma is that without a tradition of "mainstream independent" broadcasting and with an unpredictable feature animation production industry, there is something of a hole in the talent pool, especially so in new technology. - Roger Noake

"However, the middle ground is very viable. Because of the long tradition in arts schools of independent production and of 'the art film,' the majority of students will want to produce their own work. Many try to achieve a compromise with concepts which demonstrate their talent for animation appropriate to getting a job and allows them

a personal approach. This very rarely works. Another way is to encourage a team approach with the roles of animator, director, etc. taken by individual students. This recognizes both the individual talent and the important factor of teamwork. The highly experimental animator usually does not have a problem and can often find employment at least as fast as those taking the traditional route if they are good.

"In the end, it is our job, the instructors, to help students make the choice by giving them as much information about the world of animation and about their own ability to take this very important decision."



Christy Karacas created Space Wars, an irreverent, comic, hand-drawn film during his senior year at RISD. The filmmaker is now "paying the rent" with money he received from MTV who bought Space Wars for their Cartoon Sushi program. © 1997 Christy Karacas

Rolf Bächler, Schools of Applied Art: Zurich and Lucerne

"What exactly is the so-called dichotomy 'mainstream' vs. 'work of one's own'? Does the latter stand for self-determined, automatically gratifying, fulfilling art? The former for non-self-determined, therefore unsatisfactory and by constraint, frustrating slave work? Are the two categorically irreconcilable?

"Thinking of people like Borge Ring, I'm not so sure. Borge Ring is one of the foremost animators in Europe. He has been in the business since the '50s, worked on practically every European cartoon feature of the '70s and '80s and has trained generations of recognized and forthcoming artists all over the continent. In all of this time, he has made 'only' two personal films: *Oh My Darling* (1978) and *Anna & Bella* (1984). Both have decidedly 'mainstream' appeal but are at the same time highly personal, with a strong author's voice. Both were also highly successful, acclaimed by general audiences as well as by animation buffs. The films won an Academy Award nomination (1978) and an Academy Award (1985) besides a plethora of other distinctions. When asked why he never made more personal films, Borge Ring answered that he found so much satisfaction and gratification in his work as a 'hired hand,' he never felt there was 'a lack to compensate.'

So ask your heart: What kind of career do you see for yourself? Then, just go for it. - Rolf Bächler

"Gratification in one's work is not reserved to any one way. So ask your heart: What kind of career do you see for yourself? Then, just go for it."

Note: The online version of this article contains Quicktime movies of the student films *12 Ball* and *Space Wars*.

http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.10/2.10pages/2.10student.html

Heather Kenyon is Editor in Chief of Animation World Magazine.

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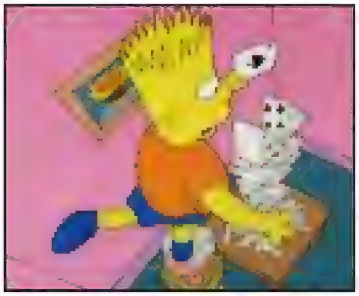

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Cartoombria:
Anime and Independent Animation

festival review by Chiara Magri

As if organizing an animation festival in Italy is not difficult enough, this year Cartoombria, which ran from November 27 to 29, also had to deal with the threat of earthquakes which hit the Umbria area for more than a month.

The poster sums up in a comical, rather than an aggressive way, the underlying theme of the Festival: the often difficult meeting ground between Japanese and independent, artistic film.

But not even natural disasters could stop Luca Raffaelli, director of the Festival, from offering a program containing a wide range of animation from a variety of productions. The setting for Cartoombria is the magnificent old Pavone Theater, where the spectator can watch the screenings, meetings, presentations and debates on a wide range of themes, types, styles and applications from morning until late at night. Each section of the Festival is hosted on one particular day rather then being divided into daily blocks as in most festivals. This scheme creates interesting contrasts and couplings, and obliges a stimulating reflection on the language of animation in all its multicolored facets.

Fostering Understanding

The Cartoombria '97 poster, designed by Osvaldo Cavandoli, presents a horrible Japanese-style cartoon robot showing a metallic fist, beneath him is the artist's famous character from *La linea* (*The Line*), responding in an inequivocable rude gesture. The poster sums up in a comical, rather than an aggressive way, the underlying theme of the Festival: the often difficult meeting ground between Japanese and independent, artistic film in Italy.

Luca Raffaelli, Cartoombria Director, and Pierluigi De Mas, ASIFA Italia President. Photo courtesy of Chiara Magri.

This apparently contradictory position provides a very piquant and useful premise for the analysis of the role of animation in communication and entertainment, and its possible development. In both cases, in fact, one can see how animation is tending to break out of the confines of children's productions to meet the needs of the adult world or to express an independent art form. In Italy, as in the majority of western cultures, Japanese animation does not receive critical acclaim. Commercial broadcasters have tended to fill their schedules with these cartoons; buying them in bulk without any specific criteria and cutting them up to fit in with other children's programs which are already made to very low standards. On the other hand, Italian animators have, until very recently, been excluded from the television market and have nearly always shown aversion, or at least indifference, to the relatively poor Japanese product which is seen as an unwanted competitor.

Cartoombria has bravely attempted to close the distance between these two worlds. It was a great pleasure to see the enthusiasm of the young Japanese animation fans, while the connoisseurs and filmmakers suddenly discovered the extraordinary variety of Japanese productions.

The independent short risks disappearing altogether, or at least being limited by the means and schools available to help students.

Complete versions of the *Sailor Moon* series were seen along with the feature thriller *Perfect Blue* by Satoshi Kan produced by Mad

Osvaldo Cavandoli next to the Cartoombria '97 festival poster which he designed. Photo Courtesy of Chiara Magri.

House Studios. The Italian premiere of the epic series *Neon Genesis Evangelion* by Hideaki Hanno took place as well. *Sailor Moon* drew the attention of both the public and media with absurd worries about "political correctness" which is very fashionable with Italian broadcasters at the moment. Worries of covering up the really rather innocent young warrior's buttocks with gleaming diamonds are misplaced when compared to the barbaric cuts and re-edits of the original, leaving it without the soundtrack and reduced to a disconnected incomprehensible sequence of events with no rhyme or reason.

Let's hope that Cartoombria helps to show that the Italian public is ready for certain products.

The Competition

Cartoombria has made a significant leap forward this year in the independent short films category with a new international award, in addition to the traditional award for Italian films. The jury was made up of: animation historian and director of the British Animation Awards, Jayne Pilling, the Argentinean illustrator and multimedia director Oscar Chiericoni and Lorenzo Mattotti, one of the foremost Italian illustrators.

The Grand Prix went to Craig Welch's *How Wings are Attached to the Backs of Angels*, a dark, complex work on the subject of disturbing psychic mechanisms which was produced by the National Film Board of Canada. The Special Jury Prize went to German Solweig Von Kleist whose *Le Roman de Mon Âme* uses bright acrylic paintings to flick through a variety of female memories and imaginings. The Jury decided to exclude two medium-length features which were "very important high-quality works, *Flatworld* by Daniel Greaves and *La Vieille Dame et Les Pigeons* by Sylvain Chomet, since they totally differ from other works both in terms of context and production means."

One could argue at length about this decision and the difficulties Festivals encounter when defining the term "short film," but this is not the best place to do so. Suffice it to say, that this problem should be considered for the Italian competition but for very different reasons. In fact, the Jury had few problems deciding the Cartoombria Italy award which was given to one of the most modest, tenacious, inspiring animators in Italy. The film was the brief and intense *Quasi Niente* (*Almost Nothing*) by Ursula Ferrara, who has for years solely produced moving fragments of daily life. The award confirmed the talent, recognized both in Italy and abroad, of the author and, in addition, underlined the dramatic scarcity of Italian short films. The complete Italian

Cartoombria Festival Poster '97

shorts competition lasted 40 minutes in all, not completely due to the lack of productions but simply because of their extreme brevity. We saw many young filmmakers present interesting styles and themes in just a few seconds, but unfortunately, they cannot develop them further due to budget limitations. In Italy these difficulties are traditionally enormous because animation is virtually excluded from state aid or incentives and from universities, schools and art colleges. There is just one single film school capable of producing animation, the Experimental Film Center (Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia) which did not present a film at this year's festival. These obstacles have been heightened by the fact that nearly all the Italian animation studios have been working on producing series following a change in broadcasters' policies in Italy which has led to an increased investment in this sector. The independent short risks disappearing altogether, or at least being limited by the means and schools available to help students.

Italian competition winner Ursula Ferrara. Photo courtesy of Chiara Magri.

Tributes and Other Events

This year the Cartoombria tributes centered on a pair of artists who represent two very different facets of independent animation. One tribute was dedicated to the Italian Osvaldo Cavandoli who won both public, when able to reach them, and critical acclaim by using inventive and amusingly burlesque graphics and sound. The other was dedicated to the Dane Leif Marcussen, a visionary magician and a sophisticated, ingenious manipulator of shapes. There were long applause for both. Our Cavandoli was especially moved. (Probably, I believe, by the applause from the Japanese cartoon fans.) Unfortunately, Leif Marcussen was not able to take part for health reasons, but he was warmly applauded and wishes for a fast recovery were sent.

Cartoombria also gave a look at television series. Concerned with censorship and politically correct themes the spectators were shown a real gem, the American series *South Park* by Trey Parker and Matt Stone produced by Comedy Central. The public enjoyed it not only for the outrageous stories but also for the "primitive" animation technique and graphics which are rightly reduced to the bare essentials. Another treat was the series pilot of *Cocco Bill*, a spaghetti western and cult figure in Italian comics by Jacovitti, which at last reaches the screen with a version by Pierluigi De Mas.

Among the children's programs, *Eugenio* was greatly appreciated. It is a television special about a sad clown from the wonderful illustrated story by Lorenzo Mattotti, directed by the French Jean-Jacques Prunès and distributed by EVA Entertainment. The feature film, *Joe's Apartment* by John Payson, produced by Geffen Pictures for MTV, was also a great success. Italian distribution decided to exclude this film from the cinema circuits and distribute it only on video. Let's hope that Cartoombria helps to show that the Italian public is ready for certain products.

Quasi Niente (Almost Nothing) by Ursula Ferrera. Photo courtesy of Chiara Magri.

Translated from Italian by Guy Watts.

Chiara Magri has worked in animation since 1984. She coordinates both cultural activities and professional training courses for ASIFA Italy. She was responsible for the programming of the International Festival of Animated Film of Treviso. Since 1993 she has been teaching a course in animated film history at the Instituto Europeo di Design in Turin. Since 1989 she has edited and published the monthly ASIFA newsletter, the only specialized publication on animation in Italy. Recently, she has carried out an in-depth survey on the production sector of animation in Italy for RAI, the Italian national broadcaster, which is soon to be published.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

CARTOOMBRI
A fra animé e film d'autore

la rassegna del festival da Chiara Magri

Come se non bastassero le difficoltà che un Festival di animazione in Italia deve affrontare, quest'anno Cartoombria, tenutasi dal 27 al 29 novembre scorsi, ha dovuto fare i conti anche con il terremoto.

Sotto di lui la Linea, il celebre personaggio degli shorts di Cavandoli, gli risponde con un messaggio inequivocabile nel linguaggio gestuale italiano.

Le difficoltà non hanno impedito a Luca Raffaelli, direttore artistico del Festival, di offrire al suo pubblico un programma che fa di Cartoombria un grande contenitore della produzione d'animazione nella più ampia varietà di linguaggi e di finalità. Lo spettatore di Cartoombria si trova fisicamente in questo unico contenitore, il magnifico teatro storico del Pavone, per seguire dal mattino a notte fonda le proiezioni, gli incontri, le presentazioni e i dibattiti programmati come un rapido susseguirsi di temi, di generi, di stili, di applicazioni diverse. Ogni sezione del Festival infatti si sviluppa orizzontalmente attraverso i tre giorni della manifestazione, piuttosto che verticalmente come nella consuetudine più accettata nei programmi festivalieri. Tutto ciò, se resistete ad un ritmo piuttosto incalzante, crea interessanti contrasti e accostamenti e obbliga ad una riflessione sul linguaggio dell'animazione nel suo insieme e nella sua varietà.

Incoraggiare la comprensione

Il manifesto di Cartoombria '97, disegnato da Osvaldo Cavandoli presenta un orribile robot del cartoon giapponese esibire dal quadro di un fotogramma un metallico pugno. Sotto di lui *la Linea*, il celebre personaggio degli shorts di Cavandoli, gli risponde con un messaggio inequivocabile nel linguaggio gestuale italiano. Sintesi divertita più che aggressiva del tema di fondo della manifestazione: l'incontro, spesso non facile, tra l'animazione giapponese e l'animazione d'autore. Questa impostazione apparentemente contraddittoria offre invece una ottica assai utile per analizzare il ruolo dell'animazione nella comunicazione e nell'entertainment e i suoi possibili sviluppi. In entrambi i casi infatti si constata come l'animazione sappia e anzi tenda ad uscire dai limiti del prodotto per bambini per rispondere ad esigenze spettacolari adulte o per esprimersi come forma d'arte autonoma. In Italia, come forse in gran parte della cultura occidentale, l'animazione giapponese è assai poco considerata. Le televisioni che ne hanno riempito i loro palinsensti che ancora vi fanno abbondante ricorso, hanno utilizzato il cartoon giapponese in un'ottica commerciale molto ottusa, acquistando animé a peso, senza alcuna competenza specifica, adeguandoli con editing arbitrari e mutilanti alle esigenze di una programmazione per ragazzi già ben poco curata. D'altra parte gli animatori italiani, che fino a pochissimo tempo fa sono stati esclusi dal mercato televisivo, hanno quasi sempre manifestato avversione o almeno assoluta indifferenza per un prodotto vissuto come "concorrenza sleale" oltre che conosciuto nelle sue versioni più deteriorate. Cartoombria si propone coraggiosamente di avvicinare questi mondi. E' un vero piacere vedere con quanta attenzione i giovani fans dell'animé osservino la adulta diversità del corto d'autore mentre i cultori e gli autori dell'arte dell'animazione occidentale si affacciano al mondo dell'animé improvvisamente scoperto nella sua straordinaria varietà, nella sua capacità comunicativa e spettacolare.

Luca Raffaelli, Cartoombria Director, and Pierluigi De Mas, ASIFA Italia President. Photo courtesy of Chiara Magri.

Osvaldo Cavandoli next to the Cartoombria '97 festival poster which he designed. Photo Courtesy of Chiara Magri.

Si sono visti episodi dalla serie di *Sailor Moon* nella coerenza della versione integrale, il lungometraggio thriller *Perfect Blue* di Satoshi Kan, prodotto dagli studi Mad House, l'anteprima italiana della serie drammatica *Neon Genesis Evangelion* di Hideaki Hanno. Proprio *Sailor Moon* ha portato all'attenzione del pubblico e anche della stampa italiana l'assurdità di certe preoccupazioni di correttezza politica oggi in voga presso le emittenti italiane. Ci si preoccupa di coprire con diamanti posticci e ridicoli il sedere, già assai casto, della giovane guerriera Sailor ma non ci si preoccupa di proporre ai ragazzi film fatti a brandelli dalle riedizioni, rimontati, privati del sonoro originale e ridotti a sconnessi e incomprensibili susseguirsi di eventi privati di consequenzialità e di senso.

Il concorso

Su fronte del cortometraggio d'autore Cartoombria ha fatto quest'anno un notevole passo avanti con l'istituzione del Premio internazionale che affianca il tradizionale premio al film italiano. La giuria era composta dall'inglese Jayne Pilling, nota studiosa di animazione e direttrice dei British Animation Awards, dall'argentino Oscar Chiriconi, illustratore e direttore artistico di multimedia e da Lorenzo Mattotti, uno dei più apprezzati illustratori italiani. Il Gran Premio è andato al tetro e complesso bianco e nero di *How Wings are Attached to the Backs of Angels*, un lavoro di Craig Welch prodotto dal National Film Board of Canada che usa l'animazione per radiografare inquietanti meccanismi psichici. Il premio speciale della Giuria è andato alla tedesca Solweig von Kleist che con *Le roman de mon âme* usa la sua smagliante pittura acrilica per sfogliare pagine di ricordi e fantasie femminili.

Cartoombria Festival Poster '97

La Giuria ha deciso di escludere dal concorso due mediometraggi "molto importanti e di alta qualità come *Flatworld* di Daniel Greaves e *La vieille dame et le pigeons* di Sylvain Chomet perché si discostano totalmente dalle altre produzioni, per differenze evidenti di contesto, possibilità e mezzi di produzione". Si potrebbe discutere a lungo di questa decisione e del suo rapporto con la difficoltà che i festival specializzati incontrano sempre più nel definire i confini della categoria dei "cortometraggi a soggetto", ma ci porterebbe troppo lontano. Ci limitiamo a considerare come questo problema si sia posto anche nel concorso italiano, ma per motivi assai diversi.

Il corto d'autore rischia insomma di sparire o di doversi limitare ai mezzi esigui che alcune scuole con difficoltà enormi riescono a mettere a disposizione dei loro allievi.

La giuria non ha avuto molta difficoltà nella scelta per il Premio Cartoombria Italy, assegnato all'ultimo film di una delle più modeste, tenaci e ispirati animatrici italiane. Si tratta del breve e inteso *Quasi niente* di Ursula Ferrara, una autrice che da anni, in completa autonomia, trascrive e distilla con l'animazione frammenti commoventi della quotidianità. Se il premio ha confermato un talento, già riconosciuto anche a livello internazionale, d'altra

parte la selezione ha evidenziato che la situazione del cortometraggio d'autore in Italia è davvero drammatica. L'intera presentazione dei film italiani in concorso è durata 40 minuti. Ciò non per mancanza di titoli ma per la loro estrema brevità. Abbiamo visto molti giovani autori proporre stili e temi interessanti in pochi secondi, senza avere la possibilità di vederli sviluppati, per evidente e totale carenza di budget. Le difficoltà del cortometraggio d'animazione sono tradizionalmente enormi in Italia, dove l'animazione è praticamente esclusa dagli incentivi pubblici al cinema, dalle università, dalle scuole e dagli istituti d'arte e dove non esiste comunque che una sola scuola di cinema capace di produrre animazione (il Centro Sperimentale di Cinematografia, peraltro assente dalla competizione). Da circa due anni le difficoltà sono aggravate dal fatto che praticamente tutti gli studi d'animazione italiani sono impegnati nella sfida che recentemente sia avvia in Italia alla produzione seriale, a seguito della mutata politica produttiva dell'emittente pubblica, che ha iniziato

Italian competition winner Ursula Ferrara. Photo courtesy of Chiara Magri.

ad investire sulla crescita industriale del settore in Italia. Il corto d'autore rischia insomma di sparire o di doversi limitare ai mezzi esigui che alcune scuole con difficoltà enormi riescono a mettere a disposizione dei loro allievi.

L'omaggio e altri eventi

L'omaggio di Cartoombria è andato quest'anno a due artisti che rappresentano due facce molto diverse dell'animazione d'autore. Un omaggio è stato dedicato all'italiano Osvaldo Cavandoli che ha conquistato pubblico - dove è riuscito a raggiungerlo - e critica con la geniale e burlesca essenzialità grafica e sonora di un solo personaggio burbero e bonario che nasce e vive in una sola linea bianca. L'altro è stato tributato al danese Leif Marcussen, un mago della visione, un manipolatore raffinato e ingegnoso di forme. il pubblico ha reso un lungo applauso ad entrambi, al Cavandoli nazionale commosso (credo soprattutto dagli applausi dei fans del Giappone) e a Leif Marcussen, impossibilitato a partecipare da condizioni di salute non certamente felici e al quale è andato l'augurio più cordiale di tutto il pubblico.

Cartoombria ha dato poi un'occhiata anche alle serie TV. Sempre in tema di censura e di correttezza politica ha presentato una chicca per il pubblico italiano, la serie americana *South Park* di Trey Parker e Matt Stone prodotta dalla Comedy Central di New York, che ha divertito il pubblico non solo per la forza del soggetto tanto scorretto ma anche per la "scorrettezza" tecnica di una animazione e di una grafica ridotte giustamente all'osso. Un'altra gioia per il pubblico è stata la presentazione del pilota del *Cocco Bill* che Pierluigi De Mas ha realizzato per il progetto di serie incentrato sul capolavoro di Jacovitti.

Cartoombria ha dedicato poi alcuni programmi al pubblico infantile puntando su film di grande qualità e originalità. Fra i più apprezzati si è visto, in anteprima mondiale, lo special televisivo per i più piccoli *Eugenio,* avventura di un clown triste tratta dalla bellissima storia illustrata di Lorenzo Mattotti, diretto dal francese Jean-Jacques Prunès e distribuito da EVA Entertainment. Un grande entusiasmo di piccoli e grandi ha accolto poi *Joe's Apartment* il lungometraggio di John Payson prodotto dalla Geffen Pictures per MTV, che la distribuzione italiana ha deciso di escludere dal circuito delle sale puntando soltanto sulle vendite homevideo. Speriamo che Cartoombria contribuisca a evidenziare che il pubblico italiano è maturo per certe scelte.

Quasi Niente (Almost Nothing) by Ursula Ferrera. Photo courtesy of Chiara Magri.

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Una rapporto completo da Cartoombria è pubblicato sulla newsletter di Asifa Italia di dicembre.

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milia '98

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The Digital Video Conference and Exposition in Burbank, California

by John Parazette-Tillar

It was one of those beautiful summer into fall days that makes Los Angeles the place to be - low 70s, slightly breezy, and clear (for a change!). This day also marked the start of the first Digital Video Conference and Exposition presented by Miller Freeman, publisher of *Digital Video (DV), InterActivity* and *3D Design* magazines. The goal of the presenters was to provide an annual forum/training event where those involved in the various arms of digital video, one of the most rapidly evolving fields in the technology arena, could come together and tap one of the most up-to-date sources of knowledge and information.

Crowds gather at the showroom entrance at DV '97. Photo courtesy of Miller Freeman. © photographer Mark Madeo.

It was a virtual cornucopia of classes in almost every aspect of digital video.

Conference Success

The conferences ran the gamut of video and audio ranging from: concept to post-production; neophyte to professional; low bandwidth web video to D1 broadcast quality; 2-D and 3-D; and various hardware and software non-linear editing (NLE) choices... In fact, it was a virtual cornucopia of classes in almost every aspect of digital video. One suggestion from the "peanut gallery" would be to group the classes into various tracks, such as "Web," "Broadcast," or "3-D." It would have been helpful as the 60+ courses over four days made choosing quite a chore! During the week, I attended quite a few classes, and found all of them to be full of valuable tidbits of information. One shining star in the series was "After Effects for Film and Video," presented by Trish Meyer, co-owner of CyberMotion in Los Angeles. A consummate After Effects professional, Trish brings years of experience to the table, yet expounds her knowledge in a highly approachable manner for both the beginner and intermediate user. Meanwhile, the advanced designer is never at a loss to garner a few prize tidbits from one of her presentations. As a contributor for Adobe Press' "Classroom in a Book" series, instructor at the American Film Institute, and contributing editor for *DV* magazine, she draws from a vast experience base. Kudos to a fine presentation.

Keynote Thoughts

Another highlight was the Keynote Address evening, which was kicked off by The Big Bang Happy Hour, a wonderful way to meet up with others who generally spend too much time in front of their computer monitors. The Keynote was presented by Billy Pittard, CEO of Pittard Sullivan. In his presentation, he spoke of many digital video concerns and potentials, from the diverse and competing hardware wars, with their confusing array of formats, to his amazement that nobody actually predicted the success of the Internet. One phrase regarding the vast confusion of hardware/format choices that still haunts me was, "I can guarantee you that it's going to get a lot worse before it gets better." The presentation was actually very upbeat, and filled with superb advice on real world business strategies and design creativity.

I was struck by the thought that we are faced with so many technological choices and advances bombarding us in rapid succession, that we can become almost inert...

As a result of his talk, I was struck by the thought that we are

faced with so many technological choices and advances bombarding us in rapid succession, that we can become almost inert when having to make a decision. How does one select between the plethora of hardware and software, let alone the various competing formats that arise from such technological advances? Where does one go to learn and study so as to make the best educated guess of platform, high-end vs. low-end hardware and converging delivery systems? We are at a stage in digital video development where what could only be produced on high-end (translate: big dollars), state-of-the-art workstations, can now be accomplished on hardware in a "garage band" style, with off-the-shelf hardware and software components. The only real plus to the high-end workstation route is the savings of time (translate: money). We need to focus on the human basics that drive us to create better, more informative, emotion wrenching content, not the bells and whistles. The type of tool is secondary to the final result on the screen.

Caught In The Middle

The Exposition, on the other hand, left me wanting more. The timing of the event places it in the middle of the two industry powerhouses, SIGGRAPH and COMDEX, which may explain why some major players in the digital video game were not there. It seemed as if the companies present were gearing their hardware and software releases to coincide with either COMDEX or SIGGRAPH (and maybe later at NAB?), which left the Digital Video Exposition as a platform for regurgitated SIGGRAPH announcements and hushed non-disclosure agreement rumors of product to be revealed at COMDEX this coming fall. That said, let's wander through the aisles and look at some of my highlights.

Billy Pittard, CEO of Pittard Sullivan, delivered the keynote address at DV '97. Photo courtesy of Miller Freeman. © photographer Mark Madeo.

New Gadgets

Play, Incorporated, famous for their consumer "gizmo" Snappy Video Snapshot (one of the best selling frame grabbers on the market), was there to tout Trinity. Trinity is one of the most eagerly awaited all-in-one video production boxes. It includes a live D1 production switcher, 3-D digital video effects, non-linear/linear editor, character generator, paint, animation, compositing, virtual sets, dual channel D1 still store, chroma keyer, two timebase correctors, etc. All in all everything one could want to create a broadcast presentation for a proposed U.S.$4,995. It works with a standard Pentium PC. As of this writing, it is yet to start shipping, but definitely keep an eye on this one.

Integrated Computing Engines, Inc. were showing their ICDfx 4.0, an integrated hardware/software special

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Participants in one of more than 60 classes offered at DV '97. Photo courtesy of Miller Freeman. © photographer Mark Madeo.

effects editor for Mac and WinNt. ICEfx is a rendering engine on a single PCI card and software suite that places your desktop system on a par with the big guns, providing accelerated rendering for After Effects. ICEfx is priced around $4,995.

Zoran, a major chip provider for PC multimedia markets (ATI, Avid, IBM, Matrox, Miro, Pinnacle, Truevision and others have used Zoran products and technologies), displayed Video Inlet, the first video capture design to enable high-quality, full motion capture via the USB (Uniform Serial Bus) on the PC. Expect to hear much more on this in the near future as USB compliant motherboards become the standard.

The timing of the event places it in the middle of the two industry powerhouses, SIGGRAPH and COMDEX...

Intel graced us with some new technology. First, Intel Web Design Effects provides rich, animated special effects, such as water, fire and clouds, for web developers. It incorporates new technology available in Internet Explorer 4.0 browsers that provide the user with animated effects at very fast download times. Next, Intel Indeo Video Software 5.0 gives advanced capability to adjust video quality according to the end users Internet connection speed. Both of these products are a must see for web video content producers. Another Intel product, the Intel Smart Video Recorder III, a real-time video capture/compression card for IBM compatible machines, absolutely amazed me. At a price of $199, the cost to enter the world of digital video has never been lower, while the quality for multimedia and web presentations is astounding!

When putting together your next blockbuster, you must get in touch with the folks at Artbeats. Their products Realfire2 and ReelExplosions will give you the most realistic explosions and pyrotechnic displays available on disc. The effects are provided as high resolution QuickTime and TARGA sequences that can be used with any software that can import either format. Both are royalty-free and broadcast quality, digitized from 35mm and 16mm footage. After using these in an After Effects project, I was impressed at the quality. For a suggested $499 investment, you may never shoot a pyrotechnic insert on film or video again.

Another hot new plug-in for After Effects was Cinelook Broadcast from DigiEffects. The plug-in generates a "film" look for video footage. It can create film grain, control colors, luminance, curves and other film effects like duotone, scratches (my favorite is the leader damage preset), dust, etc. It is amazing how well one can match a particular film stock feel from video using this well produced tool. It's fairly intuitive and with a generous supply of presets to get you started, you can get down to work almost immediately.

All in All

The experience was positive and I feel that I benefited from the wealth of information presented at the conference. A general theme that was present at most of the sessions I attended was one of trying to figure out the Apple dilemma and the appearance of our favorite and most utilitarian pieces of software on the Windows platform. So how does one choose intelligently, and at the same time not get left in the dust by the next, latest, greatest technology that is just around the corner? That will be the "Quest for the Holy Grail" for everyone involved in the business of producing digital video content as we approach the coming millennium; and that is where gatherings of like-minded folk, such as the inaugural Digital Video Conference and Exposition in Burbank, will help us to keep our heads above water.

John Parazette-Tillar has a background in multimedia graphic design, specializing in After Effects and Digital Video. He is a computer graphics instructor at Cal State Long Beach-UCES, and has received many certificates from the American Film Institute and Cal State Long Beach. He currently teaches courses in Illustrator and Interactive Media Desktop Presentation.

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One Divided By Two: An Emotional Equation

by Emru Townsend

There was a time, it's been said, when divorces were rare and people married forever. Times, of course, have changed. Divorce and separation have become more acceptable, to the point where it's not unreasonable to suggest that everyone has either been through a divorce or knows someone who has. We see and hear about divorce all the time; alimony payments, remarriages, and custody battles are the stuff of news, celebrity gossip, and stand-up comedy. In fact, the NBC sitcom *Veronica's Closet* milks the divorce proceedings of the title character to no end.

But somewhere amid all the laugh tracks, we know that divorce isn't funny. Two people who planned to build a life together find themselves at odds, and end up trying to salvage what they can as they simultaneously break down what they endeavored to build.

The animated segments, essentially rewritten composites of interviewed children's stories, are the heart of the film.

Or so you'd think. What many people forget is that divorce isn't always about two people; sometimes it's about three, four, or five. Most people don't mention that children are often lost in the shuffle when it comes to divorce; when they do, it's rarely more than the platitude that divorce is hard on children.

One Divided by Two depicts, through illustration, the reversed role in which children of divorced parents often find themselves. © Joyce Borenstein.

Joyce Borenstein's latest film, *One Divided By Two,* provides an antidote, giving us a unique look into the lives of children affected by the divorce of their parents.

An Animated Documentary

The 24-minute film began life as three short stories written by Edeet Ravel. Based on her own divorce, the stories were a fictionalized version of her child's perspective of the experience. Ravel brought her stories to Borenstein, who contacted Rhona Bezonsky-Jacobs, a psychotherapist who specializes in children who have lived through their parents' divorce. Together, the three decided to make a film, interviewing dozens of children between 8 and 18 for their source material.

In *One Divided By Two,* thirteen of these children offer their points of view on their parents' divorces. Loosely organized by subject matter - for example, anxiety over losing a parent, fear of not being in a "normal" family, or dealing with being "shared" by divorced parents - live-action footage of the children's comments are intercut with longer stories being presented as animation. Borenstein, who similarly combined live-action and animation for her short film *The Colours of My Father* which received an Oscar nod in 1993, sees nothing incongruous in creating a documentary based on real events through animation. "I wanted to erase all boundaries between genres," she says. "Or at least try to."

A Simple Style Tells All

The animated segments, essentially rewritten composites of interviewed children's stories, are the heart of the film. Borenstein brings these experiences to life using simple, elegant images that evoke a child's simplified world view. The style was born of both aesthetic

Borenstein tackles emotional subject matter by combining reality-based live-action interviews and voice tracks with imaginative animated sequences. © Joyce Borenstein.

consideration and economic necessity. Says Borenstein, "I tried to simplify as much as I could, to get the essence. It creates a certain style that I like, but it's [also] very efficient, and it's economical. I had a limited budget and time, and ... it was a very small crew, so I had to think of simplifying the visuals and one way was to leave the non-essential things out. I worked at the beginning of the project to hone the designs down to just the essential lines. Most of the line tests, which were just pencil on paper, became final artwork, which we just cleaned up."

I worked at the beginning of the project to hone the designs down to just the essential lines. - Joyce Borenstein

This economy of style also aided one of the film's most entertaining and sometimes poignant aspects: the imagery freely alternates between literal and metaphoric depictions of events, with people, objects and perspectives changing shape from moment to moment. For instance, when a boy comes home to find his divorced mother crying for reasons he can't understand, he assumes the role of caregiver, suddenly growing in size to cradle his mother in his arms.

One of several underlying themes in *One Divided By Two* is, according to Borenstein, that "there are as many different divorce situations as there are people." Although the film's visuals are unified by the illustration style and consistent use of vibrant colored pencils, the differences in the stories are partly reflected by the variety of color schemes and shifts in technique. However, the most striking element that identifies each story is the use of intricate textures to fill parts of the foreground and background. Though the textures look time-consuming, they fit into Borenstein's method of keeping it quick and simple. "I did the artwork, and then this company transposed them onto metal plates, with embossed areas. What was black on the artwork became embossed on the plates. The textures are actually rubbings of Prismacolor pencils on the paper which is lying over the metal plates."

Borenstein achieved rich textures in her illustrations by rubbing over embossed metal plates with colored pencils. © Joyce Borenstein.

In finding hope among the ashes of divorce, One Divided By Two displays its real magic.

A Glimmer of Hope

In theory, *One Divided By Two* is intended for children who are going through the pains of their parents' divorce. Meant to be watched in a classroom or with a parent, the film actually feels warmer on the video screen, in the smaller and more intimate setting of the living room or classroom. Although the idea is to create a dialogue between children and adults, *One Divided By Two* is also a gentle eye-opener to those whose lives have not been touched by divorce. In revealing the inner workings of children's minds, we find not only a profound sadness and sense of loss, but also a certain optimism: the sadness can be overcome, and some family ties are even strengthened. In finding hope among the ashes of divorce, *One Divided By Two* displays its real magic.

Emru Townsend is a freelance writer who won't stop talking about cinema, animation, and computers. He is also the founder and former editor of FPS, *a magazine about animation.*

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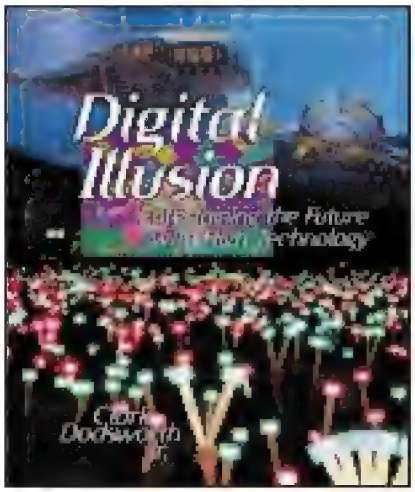
Digital Illusion - Entertaining the Future with High Technology

book review by Dan Sarto

For every person with a formal education in some flavor of technology, there are a hundred more people who have had a smattering of classes here and there, and probably a thousand more people who are self-taught, self-proclaimed "software designers" or "computer consultants" whose technical zenith was learning to program Basic on an Atari 800. Considering the quality of the vast gobs of "beta release B0.15 rev 2" software available for downloading off the Internet nowadays, it often seems that the latter group of "Certified Atari Technologists" lead the development charge at many companies.

Marketing as a Must

As a breed unto themselves, entertainment system developers often seem driven by the same frenzy, (marked by a fast pulse, shallow, rapid breathing, and a sweaty forehead), that overtakes many 14 year-olds, and 40 year-olds for that matter, prowling the long entertainment software isles of large computer stores. With entertainment giants like Sony, Disney and Fox putting huge dollars behind any and every conceivable, and ill conceived, entertainment medium, the people that now drive critical product development decisions aren't always highly skilled veteran technologists, but rather media executives touting their latest mega marketing idea. You know, the ones who rig the schemes where the same cute characters adorn pillow cases, theme park rides, audio cassette sing-alongs, and interactive multimedia game cartridges, all at the same time. There's an old joke that needs updating for the '90s: What did the drummer say at his first paying gig? "Would you like fries and a Mighty Zanthrogeek CyberWarlock action figure with that?"



It's a given that product development in any industry must be market-driven.

It's a given that product development in any industry must be market-driven. However, many high tech consumer entertainment companies appear driven by some blinding, hyped-up vision of what their focus groups and market research teams think people will buy. Their expensive miscalculations, a veritable cornucopia of "entertainment pabulum for the masses," fill the $9.95 bins at WalMarts and CompUSAs throughout the land.

So, what can we do to take a step back, catch our breath, and gain some much needed perspective on the dizzying worlds of digital entertainment? For starters, there's a book we need to read.

Getting Some Perspective

Clark Dodsworth Jr., a specialist in converging entertainment technologies, has gathered together a group of leading technologists to create a masterpiece - part history lesson, part blueprint, part vision of the future - that is a must read for anyone who hopes to make a living involved with creating, producing or distributing entertainment technology.

Digital Illusion - Entertaining the Future with High Technology is a tightly woven compilation of 35 chapters covering critical aspects of what Dodsworth refers to as the "entertainment beast and its future." Each chapter is penned by an industry expert, and then edited and crafted by the author into one comprehensive volume like little gems fashioned together into a magnificent tiara. *Digital Illusion* marries intelligent and descriptive narrative with detailed facts and explanations. This book has something for everybody, and should appeal to a wide audience. Newbies and wannabees can find solid fundamental descriptions about core concepts, tool sets, and practical uses of key technologies. Expert technologists can find fresh perspectives on where this "stuff" came from, where it is today, and where it's

going tomorrow.

The book is broken into six sections. It starts with the recent history and context for the disciplines of high-tech entertainment, followed by sections on the infrastructure that enabling technologies are delivered on, the "magic" of content, the delivery of the "experience," and the evolution of the requisite keyboard-less hardware platforms. The book finishes with sections on 'Serious Fun,' the culmination of the high-tech experience in theme parks and special film venues, followed by the last section on the business of entertainment technologies, which focuses on subjects like arcades, multi-player games, virtual worlds, and digital productions.

One important reason, and one of the most important lessons I learned in reading this book, is that technology doesn't sell.

Digital Illusion puts many important topics into perspective. Often overlooked in the frenzied, market driven pace of digital entertainment, product development is the fact that technological innovation is built in layers. Expanding from and building upon the framework of today's technology, inventions create new and hopefully more popular products, and most importantly, types of entertainment experiences. Dodsworth's book doesn't proselytize or pretend to "know it all." On the contrary, it puts an analytical spin on the why, when and hows of creating the pure enjoyment, the emotional and visceral "rush" we all experience with successful digital entertainment, in order to help us think and make more educated decisions.

Gizmos Don't Sell

The cool new spaceship simulator you ride at your local theme park, the awesome kickboxing game cartridge you pop into your PlayStation, or the "most excellent" movie featuring dinosaurs flossing with human entrails, are all created using tools and technologies that have been painstakingly designed and planned for many years. But why do kids flock to that one simulator at the arcade, or why does one effects laden movie become a blockbuster while another dies an undignified death? How many thousands of entertainment products are made using the same technology, with the same financial backing, only to fail miserably?

One important reason, and one of the most important lessons I learned in reading this book, is that technology doesn't sell. An enjoyable experience that can compete with other enjoyable experiences does. (Maybe that explains why my wife would rather go to a movie with her friends than have a quiet dinner with me.) As Dodsworth's book so wonderfully points out, it is the coupling of the myriad of digital development goodies with thought and creativity that produce successful entertainment experiences. For example, the latest and greatest 3-D computer gaming engine may have taken three years to develop. It renders, it slices, it dices. It allows for innovative and truly state-of-the-art gaming experiences. Of a handful of multi-player games created with that engine, one title sells as many copies as all the others combined. What's my point? My point is that the best and most successful entertainment technologists are those that not only understand the origins and evolution of the platforms and tools they use, but marry that knowledge with smarts and creativity to build new and better experiences for the consumer.

The next great digital entertainment experience is in the clearing just up ahead.'

For every truly remarkable additional gizmo, gadget or black box, there are hundreds, if not thousands of innovations that come from the convergence and application of these latest gizmos that no one has done, or done well, before. With fresh paradigms of digital technology development and creative convergence being pioneered every day, the future of digital entertainment looks exciting and enticing. The next great digital entertainment experience is in the clearing just up ahead. Tread cautiously, because you might be walking through a digital mine field to get there.

Digital Illusion - Entertaining the Future with High Technology, edited by Clark Dodsworth Jr., Addison-Wesley and ACM Press, 1998. 545 pages, illustrated. ISBN: 0-201-84780-9.

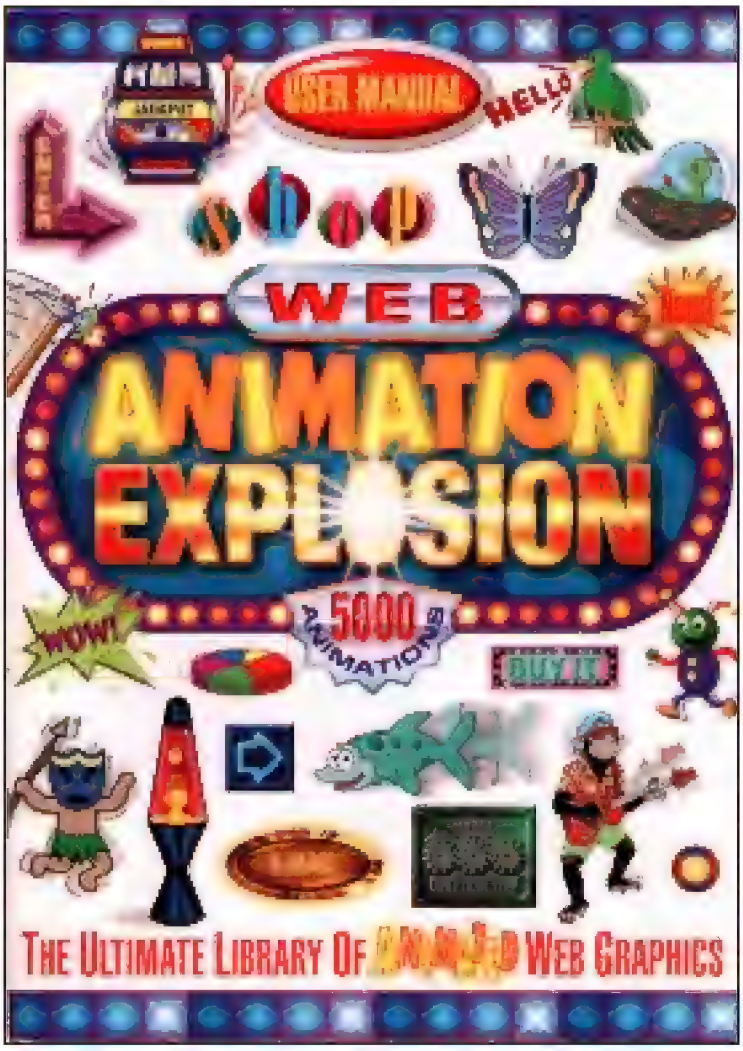
Dan Sarto is an accomplished "hack" technologist and Chief Operating Officer of AWN.

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

Web Animation Explosion: Headache Relief

software review by Ged Bauer

Today's web technologies evolve faster than anyone who chooses to have regular interaction with other humans can follow. Therefore, NOVA Development's Web Animation Explosion, a collection of web graphics featuring sophisticated and advanced animated GIFs and Shockwave movies, would be a valuable asset to any web designer. After all, who has time to learn and keep up when your site needed to be online yesterday? Who has time to deal with the headaches and frustrations of learning new software? More importantly, who has the extra *money* to buy the suite of programs needed to develop this type of product? The answer is: nobody. So if you could pick up a CD-ROM that claims to be the *ultimate library of animated web graphics* and spare all this pain for a mere exchange of dollars ($49.95), what's stopping you? Let us see and have a look inside.



Shockwave Movies

This reviewer went straight to the Shockwave movies, curious to see what the developers cooked up. Shockwave movies are interactive animations developed in Macromedia Director. In simple terms, an animation that you have control over. These elements often include sound which is a welcome addition to any web page.

Who has time to deal with the headaches and frustrations of learning new software?

Overall there is good news and bad news regarding the included Shockwave movies. The good news is that they are nicely drawn and animated. It was interesting to see Shockwave in action and what is possible, in case one decided to make the leap and start making their own. They are extremely easy to use, only requiring one to enter a provided <embed> tag in the html code. They also download fairly quickly as most are around 20k and are marvelously cute and entertaining. The bad news is that only a few are of any practical value. How many uses do you have for a virtual whoopee cushion? (Yes, an interactive whoopee cushion, and under grandma's favorite chair no less!) There are some nice rollover buttons included and it was fun on one of the animations to squish the aliens as they came out of the spaceship, but nothing is very useful for a serious page builder.

Animated GIFs

As for the Animated GIFs, there are tons to choose from on this CD-ROM. Now widely used, the technology of GIF animation had previously existed quietly in a version of Netscape Navigator. There was no public announcement and no publicity drive. The technology was more or less stumbled upon by someone with entirely too much time on their hands. GIF Animations use a series of images compressed in Compuserve GIF format playing

in a sequence with timed intervals. With a little practice you can setup multiple still images in a graphics program then put them in order in an Animated GIF building program, like the one included on this CD-ROM.

The most important aspect of course is that these animations are well done.

The GIF Animations included in these collections are, for the most part, useful and worthwhile. Some of the animations, on the other hand, are too specific to have a wide range of uses which limits their value. However, the only major gripe I have is that a lot of the animations, especially the buttons, were too big size-wise for the space-saving webmaster. These features could be really distracting on a page. It's important to mention that you do not want mass-produced elements to dominate a page, and take away from the content that you want the viewer to see. It seems silly that the product creators didn't offer variable sizes. After all, then they could brag that they have over 10,000 animations, rather than the 5,000 that they currently claim. Another word to the wise on using pre-made elements on a web page or in any fashion, whether it be on a video, brochure, or business card: you aren't the only resourceful, clever, time saving person out there. Chances are if you find something interesting or attractive on a CD-ROM, such as the one being reviewed in this article, somebody else has as well.

Time Savers

Enough constructive criticism! This CD can save you a lot of time. It contains plenty of buttons with common phrases like "home," "back," "download," and "FAQ." They vary from the very plain and generic, to colorful morphs. There are also interesting buttons without any written text. They flash. They glow. They spin and shuffle. Motion is a great touch to distinguish yourself from the static pages of yesteryear, or was it yesterday? Plus they are so easy to use. Place them in Adobe PageMill, or include a <src> tag for you html purists, just like you would for any normal image (JPEG, GIF) included on a web page.

I found some groups of animated GIFs so useful that I would definitely use them on a page I am designing, even if I didn't need to save time. My favorites were the "Icons and Symbol" group. They contain animated icons for Quicktimes and video clips, audio clips, and e-mail.

So go ahead, save yourself some headaches, buy the darn CD, and take an extra long lunch.

Another gold mine contained on the CD was the "Bullet" category. For those of you who don't know, bullets are the little dodads that you slap in front of a sentence to make it stand out, or to separate a list of items from standard text. These were some of the simpler animations included in the collection, but were by far the most useful. Since a lot of the other animations were more intricate, they had a narrow range of use. These animations can fit on any page, because they add a touch of motion and style, but won't take away from the content of the page due to their small size and simplicity.

Final Analysis

Web Animation Explosion is a good investment for those just looking to save time or for those afraid to invest in new software. The file sizes are minuscule, most are under 10k, which raises your style points without adding significant download time. Although it might take some digging, after all there are 5,000 animations to choose from, chances are you can always find something to fit your needs. The most important aspect of course is that these animations are well done. There is an aspect of talent and creativity in this collection that may be missing if you tried to do it yourself. So go ahead, save yourself some headaches, buy the darn CD, and take an extra long lunch.

Web Animation Explosion, published by Nova Development Corp. Hybrid CD-ROM for Macintosh system 7.0 or later and Windows 3.1, 95 or NT. $49.95. http://www.novadevcorp.com

Note: the online version of this article includes samples of Shockwave and GIF animations available on Web Animation Explosion. http://www.awn.com/mag/issue2.10/2.10pages/2.10bauer.html

Ged Bauer, who has been taking longer lunches recently, is Webmaster and Graphic Designer of Animation World Network. He also has worked for Star Media Systems on Power Surge, *a series of packaged video transitions for non-linear editing software.*

Note: Readers may contact any *Animation World Magazine* contributor by sending an email to editor@awn.com.

The Netherlands Institute for Animation Film

by Erik van Drunen & Mette Peters

Since 1993 the Netherlands can boast a unique institute of art. On September 17, 1993, Hedy d'Ancona, then Minister of Culture, officially opened the Netherlands Institute for Animation Film (NIAf). The NIAf was established to improve the infrastructure for animated film in the Netherlands, both for the director's film (artistic film) and for specially-commissioned films (commercial film). Dutch animated film is currently enjoying an increased level of exposure, both within its national borders and especially abroad.

Ateliers participant, Liesbeth Worm, working on her film Tempera (1997). Photo courtesy of and. © NIAf.

The NIAf considers children to be an important target group and therefore, organizes workshops...

Our Mission

The NIAf hopes to realize its' objectives in a number of ways. The means used to achieve this are inextricably interlinked through the Ateliers, our studio, exhibitions, education, research, distribution, collection, archives and promotion. Given the developments in both Europe and farther afield, the NIAf is looking beyond its national borders and seeking cooperation and partnerships with people, organizations and festivals across the entire globe! Because promotion is such an important element, the NIAf has close contacts with the Holland Animation Film Festival, as well as with the professional association Holland Animation, Holland Film, the Association of Dutch Film Theatres, several Dutch audio-visual archives, foreign festivals and study programs.

A Stimulating Place to Work

The NIAf Ateliers offer young talented animators an opportunity to study animation for two years, and strive to be a stimulating workshop for talented filmmakers.

Participants are selected on the basis of a project which they hope to create while at the Ateliers, their motivation and their previous work. The Ateliers are explicitly not a training institute. Consequently, participants must already be familiar with the production process of animation film. The Ateliers are a place where participants can further broaden their skills in terms of content and on technical and production levels so that, on leaving, they are thoroughly equipped to work as independent entrepreneurs who can produce commercial as well as artistic work. Students are supervised by renowned animators and people who have won their spurs in other art disciplines. The chosen supervisors have backgrounds in diverse art disciplines because animation film is an art form which is strongly related to other forms of art, such as drama, choreography, visual arts, film and music. Mutual interchange between participants is part of the Ateliers' philosophy. Five participants are currently working at the NIAf, which offers all the facilities required to make both 2-D and 3-D 35mm animation films.

The Netherlands Institute for Animation Film houses a sizable collection of films, books, documentation and art work.

The NIAf follows developments within new media as closely as possible. Soundtracks and effects are produced in association with studios specializing in these fields. The first three films made in the Ateliers were completed in 1997. One of these, *Sientje* by Christa

Moesker, won the award for the Best Short Dutch Film at the 1997 Netherlands Film Festival.

Sientje by Christa Moesker (1997), made at the NIAf Atelier. Photo courtesy of and. © NIAf.

Workshops and Education

Workshops are organized for both professionals and amateurs in an attempt to raise the quality and improve the reputation of Dutch animation films. In the future, in addition to the Ateliers for animators, the NIAf plans to train specific producers in the art of animation film. The NIAf considers children to be an important target group and therefore, organizes workshops for primary school children and believes that animated film should form part of the artistic education syllabus. In conjunction with various universities in the Netherlands, the NIAf is establishing research projects which are intended to provide information on animation film in relation to the history of art, communication, information technology and business management. The NIAf also offers practical training to students who wish to examine a particular aspect of animation film in more detail.

In 1997 the NIAf organized the 9th Society for Animation Studies Conference which was held in the Netherlands. This was the first time that the international, scientific conference was held in a non-English speaking country. The number of European speakers was greater than ever. Following on from this, the NIAf wishes to continue to stimulate scientific research in European animated film.

Archived Collections

The Netherlands Institute for Animation Film houses a sizable collection of films, books, documentation and art work. A part of the film collection is used for distribution. University researchers and art academy students make frequent use of the books and documentation available.

A production photograph from The Story Of Light (1953), a commercial for General Electric. Animator Joszef Misik at work. Jan Bouwman behind the camera. Decors by Ko Brautigam. Art direction by Jan Coolen en Henk Kabos. Photo courtesy of and. © NIAf.

The collections have been brought together predominately thanks to the efforts of a number of industrious, private collectors. A special place is reserved for the collection of the Vereniging Holland Animation (VHA), the professional association of Dutch Animation filmmakers which was established in 1983.

There are more than one hundred box files full of cuttings, documentation, interviews, photographs and art work. Part of the collection comprises correspondence, minutes and administration from the VHA itself. Most of the collection, however, has been brought together thanks to private study, such as the VHA news bulletin and publications like *Tien Jaar Holland Animation* (1983) and *Joop Geesink: Poppenfilmproducent* (1984) by Ati Mul and Tjitte de Vries. The library houses many hundreds of books and magazines. A large part of the collection was amassed by Gerrit van Dijk, and includes a number of antiquarian books on the history of Dutch film. The library also has an up-to-date cuttings archive and a modest collection of videotapes. Original drawings, cels, puppets and three-dimensional objects from animation films form another collection housed by the NIAf. This original art work is highly suitable for use in exhibitions and educational projects. Both small and large exhibitions can be organized on a variety of themes. The NIAf houses objects from the entire history of Dutch animation film; from modern film makers such as Paul Driessen and Maarten Koopman, to the studios of Marten Toonder and Joop Geesink. A sizable part of this collection was brought together in 1985 for the touring exhibition "Animation In The Netherlands." This exhibition was organized by

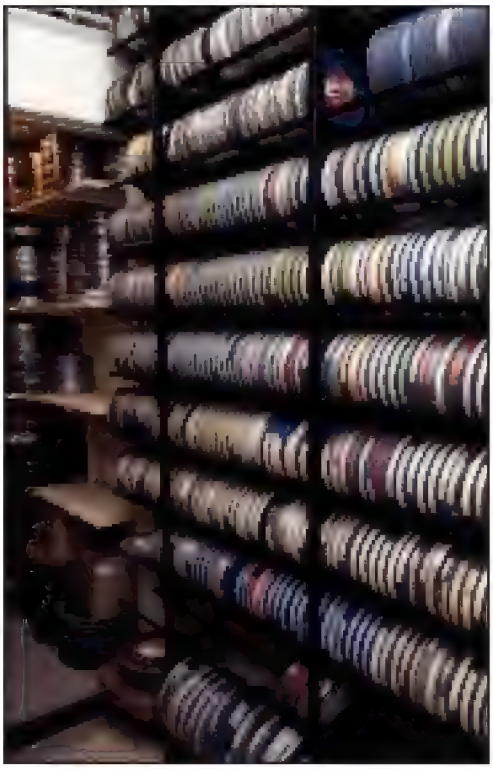
Nico Crama for the Holland Animation Foundation and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Distribution of Films

For years Cilia van Dijk was the driving force behind Stichting Animated People (STAP), distributor of animation film in the Netherlands. The collection and activities of STAP were handed over to the NIAf in 1993. The collection was comprised predominantly of 16mm films, but the present acquisition and distribution policy of the NIAf now concentrates on 35mm. The total film collection now contains some four hundred film titles. Most of these are Dutch films, but the collection also includes classics by Emile Cohl, Walt Disney, Renzo Kinoshita and Norman McLaren.

There are more than one hundred box files full of cuttings, documentation, interviews, photographs and art work.

The films are sent to festivals, cinemas, academies and schools and are generally suitable for viewing by projector. The NIAf is therefore striving for film theaters to reinstatement the screening of short films either alone or as compilations. In this context the NIAf is cooperating with a number of cinemas with artistic programming. Compilations are based on theme, genre or technique. In addition, the compositions are being made in video format. Although the NIAf's collections are constantly being added to, through donations from animators for example, hardly any active collection management takes place for the simple reason that the NIAf does not have sufficient manpower. NIAf's policy with regard to acquisition, management, conservation and the archives is still in its infancy. On the whole, the objective is to keep a representative film collection and library paying special attention to past and present Dutch animation film. For example, a database with information on Dutch animation film is being developed. The NIAf would very much like to collaborate on the further establishment of policy for the management of its own collection. This contribution may perhaps stimulate the exchange of experiences and ideas with other institutes which manage animation collections.



A glimpse of the film archives. Photo courtesy of and. © NIAf.

The NIAf would very much like to collaborate on the further establishment of policy for the management of its own collection.

Contact Details

The library and various collections are accessible to all interested parties.

The NIAf is within walking distance of the NS central railway station in Tilburg. Willem 2 straat is a side street of Spoorlaan, the street on which the station is located.

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Erik van Drunen studied animation film and photography at the Academy for Visual Design in Tilburg, the Netherlands. Since 1992 he has been associated with the Holland Animation Film Festival as programme assistant and since 1993 as project staff member at the Netherlands Institute for Animation Film. He is a member of the Board of the Holland Animation Association and assists the association with its publications.

Mette Peters is an animation historian. She publishes and teaches animation history. She is programme assistant for the Holland Animation Film Festival and she is developing a Dutch Animation Film filmography for the Netherlands Institute for Animation Film.

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NEWS

by Wendy Jackson

Animation World News is compiled daily for publication in the AWN Daily Flash, the weekly Animation Flash email newsletter, and monthly issues of *Animation World Magazine.*

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Business

Microsoft And SGI Enter A 3-D Deal. Software giant Microsoft Corp and computer graphics hardware/software maker Silicon Graphics, Inc. (SGI) have formed a partnership to jointly develop a new product aimed at making Microsoft's Windows platform a more graphics-friendly development tool. Tentatively scheduled for a spring 98 release, the product, named 3-D Graphics Device Driver Kit (DDK) will use OpenGL, a graphics visualization technology standard created by SGI but never before adopted by one-time competitor Microsoft. This is good news for Windows users, and a significant event for both the hardware and software development community, confirmed 3-D graphics analyst Jon Peddie, who said, "Microsoft is sending a clear signal that it is serious about Windows as a platform for professional 3-D graphics." For SGI, which is in the process of downsizing by cutting several hundred jobs, the development deal with Microsoft is a move outside the realm of proprietary development for its own systems. SGI's senior manager of the graphics API group Shawn Hopwood said the company "continues its drive to build the widest possible market for professional-class applications using OpenGL...a vital technology for developers providing platform-independent 3-D solutions." Kevin Dallas, group product manager for graphics and multimedia at Microsoft, said they are "very excited to be working with Silicon Graphics," adding that the initiative will "reiterate our commitment to OpenGL as the API [system] for professional applications like CAD and to Direct3D for consumer applications like games." Further announcements on the partnership between the two companies are expected.

Katzenberg, Disney Dispute Nears Settlement. Just a week before their appointed Los Angeles Superior Court trial date of November 18, The Walt Disney Company agreed to an out-of-court settlement with former Disney film division head Jeffrey Katzenberg. Katzenberg, who left Disney in 1994, and went on to form DreamWorks SKG with Steven Spielberg and David Geffen, filed a $250 million lawsuit against Disney in April 1996. In the lawsuit, Katzenberg claims that, according to his contract, the company owes him the said amount as a percentage of profits from all product "put into distribution or production" during his ten years at Disney. Even though he no longer works there, Katzenberg says that he should benefit from the profits incurred from continued distribution of old product, one of Disney's great strengths. The "partial settlement" recently agreed upon does not mark the end of the dispute between the two parties, but it does move the legal process forward, without trial, to the arbitration phase in which it will be determined exactly how much Disney will hand over to Katzenberg. This amount will be decided upon in private proceedings, the terms of which, the parties have agreed, "will remain confidential." Looking at the big picture, the settlement was probably the best move for Disney, because it avoids the negative media attention that comes with a trial of this nature.

Vinton To Work With Iwerks. Portland, Oregon-based animation house, Will Vinton Studios has formed a contract with location-based (ridefilm) entertainment giant, Iwerks Entertainment, to jointly develop, produce and market film-based attractions for theme park and entertainment locations. Vinton will most likely produce 3-D computer animated films for large formats (70mm) such as those used in ride films and IMAX-type theaters. The deal between the two companies was signed in December at IAAPA, the trade show for the International Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions. Will Vinton Studios' CEO Tom Turpin

said, "Both companies are committed to innovation." Iwerks CEO Roy Wright added, "we feel that partnering with Will Vinton Studios' ability to create characters and stories will allow us to raise the bar in the industry."

HIT Has High Hopes For Home Video. London-based HIT Entertainment has launched a video distribution arm, through which the company will distribute animated fare to the retail home video market. The first titles to be released are collections of half-hour episodes of TV series owned by HIT, including *Brambly Hedge* and *Percy the Park Keeper.* Two videos of each of these series were released in September and November, and more are planned for 1998. HIT anticipates that the launch into video will help the company to further develop licensing and merchandising activities. HIT chairman Robin Nellist also says that the company aims "to manage the exploitation of these rights in different markets; pay TV, terrestrial, basic cable, satellite and home video." Future plans include video releases of additional HIT-owned series, including *Kipper,* currently airing on the ITV Network, *Archibald the Koala,* in co-production with French studio Millimages, *Anthony Ant,* a series for BBC, *Bob the Builder,* a stop-motion series for pre-schoolers and *Fairies!,* four specials currently in development.

Disney Makes A Splash In Japan. The Walt Disney Company is expanding its presence in Japan with a new aquatic-themed amusement park called DisneySea. Attractions will include themed rides based on *The Little Mermaid* and *Aladdin.* The park is slated to open in the year 2000, and will be the second Disney theme park in Japan, next to Tokyo Disneyland.

People

Loesch Bids Farewell To Fox. It has been confirmed that Margaret Loesch, founding president of Fox Kids Network, is leaving the company that she was instrumental in building. Loesch's resignation was expected, as she has reportedly been negotiating an exit agreement for several months. This past summer, after seven years with the company, her role at Fox Kids was changed from president to vice chairman, after the company joined forces with Saban Entertainment to form Fox Kids Worldwide, a joint venture cable television operation. Haim Saban has since started overseeing operations as chairman and CEO of Fox Kids Worldwide, and former president of Nickelodeon's Nick at Nite TV Land, Rich Cronin, has been hired as president of Fox Kids Network and their recently acquired cable network, The Family Channel, effectively filling Loesch's former role.

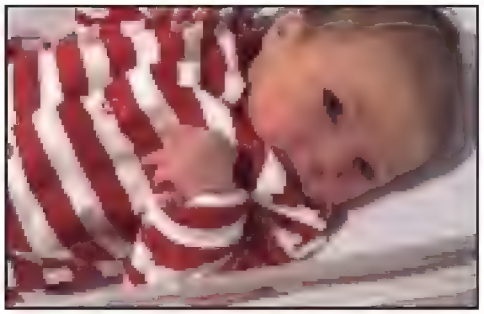
The exit agreement is said to have a non-compete clause which will prevent Loesch from working for any competing company for a set amount of time. Speculations as to where the executive could be headed next are varied, but possible avenues include Universal Television (taken over last month by HSN and USA Networks' owner Barry Diller), Disney/ABC (headed by former Nickelodeon helmer, Geraldine Laybourne) and Warner Bros. Television Animation, where Loesch's longtime friend and colleague Jean MacCurdy is currently president of Warner Bros. Television Animation and Kids WB! Programming.

In a statement issued by Fox, Loesch said, "This has been a very difficult decision for me... but I've decided that it's time to move on, and I'm eagerly looking forward to new challenges and opportunities." News Corp. president and CEO Peter Chernin said the company remains, "grateful to Margaret, as she oversaw the initial expansion of what was a nascent broadcast network into an important new service for children." Before joining Fox Kids in 1990, Loesch was president and CEO of Marvel Comics, and prior to that, she held executive posts at Hanna-Barbera and NBC. Upon being selected as one of the top women in showbiz, the strong-minded Loesch was recently quoted in Daily Variety (11/7/97) as having said, "Whatever I do, I'm sure it will be whatever people tell me not to do."

Sander Schwartz, head of Columbia TriStar Television Children's Programming. Photo by and © Lester Cohen. All Rights Reserved.

Musical Chairs Sander Schwartz has been upped from senior vice president to executive vice president and general manager of the Children's Programming and Animation wing at **Columbia Tristar Television.** He was instrumental in founding the division in 1995, which has produced and independently distributed seven kids shows, including animated series based on Sony Pictures franchises such as *Men in Black, Extreme*

Ghostbusters and *Jumanji*, and is currently in development for 1998, on *Godzilla*, *Dream of Jeannie*, and *Dragon Tales*.. . . . **Toper Taylor** has been promoted to president of **NELVANA Communications**, the Los Angeles-based programming and merchandise licensing subsidiary of Canadian animation studio, NELVANA Limited. Taylor, who was previously executive vice president, has signed a three-year contract for this new position. He joined NELVANA in 1991, following a term as a television packaging agent with the William Morris Agency . . . **Stacy Lifton** has been promoted to vice president of business and legal affairs for **Fox Kids Worldwide**. . . . **Susan Alston** has resigned as executive director of the **Comic Book Legal Defense Fund (CBLDF)**, but has been elected to the non-profit organization's Board of Directors, and has been appointed treasurer. . . . **Sam Cornell** has joined **Playhouse Pictures** as director of animation. He has been a partner in the Los Angeles-based animation studio Cornell/Abood, with Cheryl Abood. . . . **Lorri Bond** has been promoted to vice president of **Warner Bros. Classic Animation**, where she has been director since 1995. In the expanded role, she will oversee preservation and continued use of Warner's classic animation properties, and will also continue to be associate producer for *Bugs 'n' Daffy* (Kids WB!) and *The Bugs Bunny & Tweety Show* (ABC). Prior to joining Warner Bros. in 1995, Bond worked at The Disney Channel. . . . **Greg Daniels**, co-creator (with Mike Judge) and executive producer of Fox's primetime series *King of the Hill*, has signed a four-year, U.S. $16 million contract with **Fox**. *King of the Hill* which premiered in January 1997, is now the number two series on Fox. Before co-creating the show with Mike Judge, Daniels was an executive producer on *The Simpsons*. . . . **Tad Stones** has signed a new five-year contract with **Walt Disney Television Animation**, where he will be an executive producer. He is currently working in this capacity on *Disney's Hercules* animated series, slated for fall 1998. Stones has worked with The Walt Disney Company since 1974, most recently in the Television Animation division as producer of the series *Darkwing Duck* and *Chip 'n' Dale's Rescue Rangers* and the two *Aladdin* direct-to-video titles. . . . **Dea Connick Perez** has been named program director at **Cartoon Network**. She was formerly director of acquisitions at Nickelodeon/Nick at Nite TV Land. . . .**Curious Pictures** has brought on **Lisa Eve Huberman** as development director, thereby launching a division to develop long form television programming and features. Until now, the bicoastal studio has mainly focused on commercials and short-form commissioned works. Huberman was most recently involved in development of branding programs for Disney Educational Publishing and Nickelodeon. . . . **Mainframe Entertainment** has restructured its executive management, to "improve operating efficiency, control costs and streamline production." The round of internal promotions includes the appointment of **Christopher Brough** to vice chairman of the board (formerly CEO), **Ian Pearson** to president and CEO (formerly executive vice president), **Mark Ralston** to senior vice president of production (formerly chief financial officer) and **Brett Gannon** to chief financial officer. . . . **Marc-Antione D'Halluin** has been named managing director of **Fox Kids France**, which recently launched a channel through CanalSatellite. D'Halluin was previously director of corporate development, Europe, for Sony Pictures Entertainment. . . . **Henry Selick**, director of stop-motion animated features "The Nightmare Before Christmas," and "James and the Giant Peach," will start directing his first live-action feature in February. The TriStar Pictures project is a teen horror film called "Idle Hands," slated for a Halloween 1998 release. . . .**Matt Ohnemus** has joined **LoConte Goldman Design** as senior designer. He was station art director at NBC affiliate WHDH-TV in Boston. . . . **Alison Snowden and David Fine** (*Bob's Birthday* and *The Bob and Margaret Show*) are pleased to announce the birth of their first child. Their daughter, Lily Snowden-Fine was born on Monday, November 17 at 12:11 p.m. London time. "We are very happy with her and hope to get her to write a script if there is a second series of *Bob & Margaret*," the happy parents told AWN. . . .



Lily Snowden Fine, the latest addition to Snowden Fine Productions! Photo courtesy of and © David Fine and Alison Snowden.

In Passing....

Milt Neal. Animator and educator Milt Neal has died at the age of 83, in his home town of Wayne, New Jersey. A graduate of Pratt Institute in the 1930s, Neal worked at Disney

for several years in the 1940s, where he animated on such films as *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* (1937), *Fantasia* (1940), *Dumbo* (1941) and the short war film *Der Fuehrer's Face* (1943). In *The Reluctant Dragon,* a 1941 film that takes viewers behind the scenes at Walt Disney Studios, Neal is depicted in a caricature sequence during the opening credits. He is also interviewed in the recent documentary, *Cartoons Go To War.* One accomplishment that Neal was most proud of was his design work on marionettes and puppets for *The Howdy Doody Show,* a television series that aired on NBC through the 1960s. In the 1970s and '80s, Neal taught animation at the Joe Kubert School of Cartoon and Graphic Art in Dover, New Jersey. "Milt was one of the reasons that we started animation," said Joe Kubert, founder of the school which now has five animation instructors. He added, "as a result of Milt's efforts, we have somewhere between 99 and 100 percent employment of our graduates." Neal also made several independent films, the most recent of which—about Brazilian soccer player Pele—was in progress when he died.

Is the Hanna-Barbera Cartoons Building a Historical Monument? Many people in the animation industry think so. But at a public hearing on December 17, 1997 the eight-person board of the Los Angeles Cultural Heritage Commission (CHC) denied to grant Cultural-Historic Monument status to the building at 3400 Cahuenga Boulevard in Hollywood, home to Hanna-Barbera Cartoons' television animation production studio for 35 years.

Time Warner, which acquired Hanna-Barbera and its property in the 1996 merger with Turner Enterprises, has strongly opposed the initiative since it was first proposed by a Hanna-Barbera employee. At the final hearing, one of the lawyers representing Warner Bros. pleaded to the board that designation of the building as a historic monument could have "a chilling effect on a sale that's about to happen." Warner Bros. has been negotiating the sale of the building with Universal for several months. Universal owns much of the neighboring property, but at presstime, the sale had yet to be closed. CHC representatives visited the Hanna-Barbera building for review on December 3.

Nearly 50 people were present at the December 17 hearing, including former Hanna-Barbera president Fred Siebert, other ex-employees of the studio, industry professionals and several Time Warner legal and publicity representatives. Despite a show of industry support, including letters from presidents of Women in Animation and the Motion Picture Screen Cartoonists Union, the board voted unanimously against the measure, citing owner opposition as the motivating factor in their decision. Commission members were under pressure from the L.A. mayor's office to vote against the designation. Immediately before making the motion to vote, one board member joked, "I wish I'd gone out and bought 100 shares of Time Warner stock this morning so that I would be disqualified from this vote."

Peter Moruzzi, a member of the board of directors of the Los Angeles Conservancy, called the CHC's decision "scandalous," and said, "The bottom line is that the commission did not follow the [city] ordinance. It met the most significant cultural criteria. In the history of television animation, the Hanna-Barbera building is absolutely the most important site in Los Angeles."

A photo of the Hanna-Barbera Cartoons building, taken last year when the company was displaying Jonny Quest banners across the front. Photo courtesy of and © Michelle Klein Haas.

Designed by architect Arthur Froehlich, Hanna-Barbera Studios' futuristic *Jetsons*-style building has become a landmark to the animation industry since it was erected in 1962, five years after William Hanna and Joe Barbera founded the company to produce television animation. This month, the remaining staff of Hanna-Barbera Cartoons is scheduled to be relocated to a Warner Bros. building in Sherman Oaks, where their productions will continue.

Films

Sundance Selections. Bill Plympton's latest independent animated feature film, *I Married a Strange Person,* has been selected for screening at the Sundance Film Festival, January 15-25 in Park City, Utah. Selected from over 700 entries, Plympton's is the only animated feature of the 16 films in the "Dramatic Competition" category, and of the total 103 showcased features in the festival, which is known as a key venue for independent films. Plympton's first feature film, *The Tune* was screened at

Sundance in 1992, but it was not featured in competition (In addition, several of his shorts have been featured over the years, including *How to Kiss, Nosehair* and *How to Make Love to A Woman.*) . Also included in the features selection is *Orgazmo,* a live-action feature directed by *South Park* co-creator, Trey Parker. In the short film program, 68 films have been selected, including the animated films *The Broken Jaw* by Chris Shepherd and *The Corky Collection,* a compilation of five *MAD TV* shorts by Corky Quackenbush.

DreamWorks Catches Aardman's Chicken Run. Aardman Animations has finally lined up a U.S. distributor for their first full-length animated feature, *Chicken Run.* It was announced in December that DreamWorks SKG has signed on to co-finance, and distribute the film in the U.S. and most international territories outside of Europe. In addition, DreamWorks will be the exclusive worldwide licensing and merchandising rights holder for the film. The other co-financier, French company Pathe, which has been involved in the production since it went into development at Aardman over two years ago, will distribute the film in Europe. *Chicken Run* is currently in production in Bristol, England, under the direction of Aardman co-founder Peter Lord and Wallace and Gromit creator Nick Park. Jake Eberts is producing the film under Pathe's Allied Films banner. DreamWorks principal Jeffrey Katzenberg said the studio is "thrilled... excited... and honored" to be releasing this anticipated film. In addition to the tireless persistence of Katzenberg, Aardman, winner of three Oscars for animated shorts, was wooed by the likes of Warner Bros., Disney and Fox for distribution rights to the debut feature film, but they have been cautious in finding the right U.S. partner. DreamWorks expects to release the film in early 2000, which will make it either their fourth or fifth animated feature release (*Shrek* is also slated for 2000), after *Prince of Egypt* (November 1998), "Antz" (Spring 1999) and *The Road to El Dorado* (holiday 1999).

Pixar Plays Geri's Game. Pixar Animation Studios, creator of the Academy Award winning *Toy Story,* screened its new animated short film "Geri's Game," along with a collection of other Pixar shorts, November 25, 26 and 27 at Laemmle's Royal Theatre in Santa Monica, California.

Animation World Magazine got a sneak peek at the program at which Pixar chairman and CEO Steve Jobs, and chief technology officer/executive vice president Ed Catmull spoke about the studio's commitment to short films as a way of nurturing its talent, developing technologies and fostering new ideas as vehicles for "tentacle development," noting that John Lassetter created five short films "on the way to *Toy Story.*" *Geri's Game* is Pixar's first short film since they turned the focus to commercials in 1989. The film is a 3-D, CGI, animated vignette depicting an endearing old man playing chess against himself. The technical goal of *Geri's Game* was to depict a compelling, fully dimensional human character with complex facial animation, and the realistic movement of clothing. To achieve this, the studio developed sophisticated programs to calculate cloth dynamics and skin motion simulation (Subdivision Surfaces™). In this capacity, the film is an astounding achievement over the human figures depicted in the 1995 *Toy Story.* How fast technology advances!

The 4 minute and 15 second film contains over one minute of credits, proving its completion was no small task. In addition to director Jan Pinkava and producer Karen Dufilho, more than 80 people, from animators and technical directors to "render wranglers" were involved in the production. Pixar, which now employs 375 people, is currently in production on *Toy Story 2, A Bug's Life,* and in development on another feature in their ten-year, five-picture deal with Disney.

Geri's Game. © Pixar.

Visual Effects

Fx Affects

Effects-driven movies have been doing well this month in U.S. theaters, which will send a signal to the big studios to keep making them, and, in turn, bring more work to effects studios. Disney's **Flubber**, a live-action family flick with substantial use of computer generated characters and effects, was the top-

grossing film during its Thanksgiving weekend opening in November (about $36 million). Industrial Light & Magic (ILM) created the signature green goo "Flubber" animation in the film. ILM's Tom Bertino was the character animation supervisor for these Flubber sequences, and was one of three visual effects supervisors (with Peter Crosman and Douglas Hans Smith) for the film as a whole. Disney-owned DreamQuest Images did a substantial amount of atmospheric effects and CG and miniatures shots on the film's robot character, "WEEBO." In addition, several other effects studios worked on "Flubber," including JEX FX (puppet WEEBO), X.O. Digital Arts (flying ball animation), and Hammerhead Productions, Mobility, Inc. and Computer Café (additional Flubber animation), as well as POP Film, Rainmaker Digital Pictures, 525 Post Production and C.O.R.E. Digital Pictures. . . . . Another effect-driven film scoring big in the U.S box office is Fox's **Alien: Resurrection**. The fourth film in the *Alien* series, *Resurrection* features the first fully computer-generated alien, created by Blue Sky | VIFX. This task was particularly challenging because the alien is covered in a viscous slime which has a reflective surface. To make this look realistic, Blue Sky | VIFX animators and technicians had to apply detailed lighting information from the live-action shoot to the computer-generated scenes before compositing. Working mainly in Blue Sky's New York facility, Erik Henry was visual effects supervisor, Mitch Kopelman was digital effects supervisor, Christopher Scollard was digital effects producer and Jan Carlée was computer animation director. . . . **Rhythm & Hues**, the Los Angeles-based computer animation studio which won an Oscar for its' visual effects work on *Babe*, the 1995 film about a talking pig, has signed on with Universal to create the visual effects for the film's sequel, set for a Thanksgiving 1998 release. At 165 shots, the amount of effects work has increased over the first *Babe*, and apparently the studio has more than doubled its fee for the work. Bill Westenhofer is the project's visual effects supervisor, and the director of the film is George Miller (the first was directed by Chris Noonan). . . . **Digital Magic**, the visual effects arm of Burbank, California-based Four Media Company, created motion capture and CGI effects for the feature film *Mortal Kombat: Annihilation*, which opens in theaters on November 21. The effects completed by Digital Magic include shots portraying a live actor in combat with a 3-D computer-generated character. . **Engineering Animation, Inc. (EAI)** will create computer-generated lunar footage for HBO's series, *From the Earth to the Moon*, which will air in April 1998. . . . **Digital Artworks**, a 15 year-old design and animation house based in Eugene, Oregon, is opening a Los Angeles studio this week. Through a newly formed partnership with **L-Squared**, the company plans to develop its own proprietary creative properties. . . . Atlanta-based media conglomerate Crawford Communications, which owns the animation studio DESIGNefx, has launched **Crawford Digital**, an imaging and editing facility which will offer computer animation services. . . . Software developer **Positron** has released GenesisVFX, a plug-in for creating atmospheric effects with NewTek's Lightwave3D. The product, which was first offered in May 1997 as a plug-in for Kinetix 3D StudioMax and Adobe Photoshop, retails for about $420.

The dancing goo in Flubber was animated by ILM. © Disney Enterprises, Inc.

The alien in Alien: Resurrection was created entirely in CGI by Blue Sky|VIFX. © 1997 Twentieth Century Fox.

Television

Mickey Mouse Is Back! For the first time in 40 years, Mickey Mouse will be animated in new

cartoons by Disney. Walt Disney Television Animation in Toronto is launching production of a new series called *Mouseworks,* which will package new cartoons featuring Mickey, Donald Duck, Daisy, Goofy and Pluto, into weekly, 22-minute episodes scheduled for release in January 1999. In the development of the show, Roy Disney (currently vice chairman of the board of the Walt Disney Company) has been working closely with Disney TV's L.A.-based senior vice president Barry Blumberg and executive producers Roberts Gannaway and Tony Craig. As in the early Mickey Mouse "Silly Symphony" cartoons, music is being established as the driving force to provide reference for character motion and movements. In fact, the animator's term "Mickey Mousing" refers to the process of using music to accent on-screen actions of animated characters. "This is more than a return to our company's roots - it's the restoration of a staple of cartoon entertainment," said Roy Disney, "We feel... there's no more appropriate time to make this announcement than on the [69th] anniversary of Mickey's creation."

Disney Toons In New, All-Animation Channel. Disney/ABC Networks announced plans to launch a new 24-hour cable network devoted exclusively to animated programming. Toon Disney, as it is named, will be offered to cable operators which already carry The Disney Channel, starting with a launch date of April 18, 1998, which coincides with the 15th anniversary of The Disney Channel. Programming for Toon Disney will be culled from more than 2,200 episodes of Disney's existing animated TV series, such as *Darkwing*

Mouseworks. © Disney. All Rights Reserved

Duck, Gummi Bears and *New Adventures of Winnie the Pooh.* Animated shorts from the early Disney days, which The Disney Channel began airing on December 5, in a 5:00 a.m. program block called "Vault Disney," will also be shown. The remaining 25% of programming will be exclusive to Toon Disney. It has yet to be determined whether *Mouseworks,* Walt Disney Television Animation's recently announced animated series starring Mickey Mouse and friends, will air on the new network, The Disney Channel, or in syndication. Although ratings have proven Disney's animated features to be a big draw for audiences, Toon Disney programming plans do not yet include any of Disney's original theatrical features or direct-to-video films. In addition to sharing 75% of it's programming with its sister network, Toon Disney will be run by the same staff as The Disney Channel, which is overseen by Anne Sweeney (president) and Rich Ross (senior vice president of programming and production). Sweeney said, "Toon Disney is the next step towards expanding the cable presence of the Disney brand." Disney/ABC Cable Networks president Geraldine Laybourne added that the network "further enables us [Disney] to target a niche audience." The announcement of Toon Disney came at the kick-off day of the California Cable Association's Western Show, which took place last month in Anaheim, California.

An Insektors Christmas. Fantôme, the Paris-based studio that produces the 3-D computer animated TV series, *Insektors*, created a special Christmas episode titled *Pas de Kadeau pour Noël.* The 26-minute special was completed in four months with a budget of 2.2 million francs. It was broadcast on the France 3 network on December 25 at 4:25 p.m., a premium television viewing time slot. More information about Fantôme and *The Insektors Christmas Special* can be found on Animation World Network at http://www.awn.com/fantome/english/fr_noel.htm

Steven Spielberg Presents... Nickelodeon? DreamWorks Television Animation has entered a non-exclusive, co-production deal with Nickelodeon to develop several animated action/adventure series to air on the Nickelodeon cable network. Action/adventure is a departure from Nickelodeon's staple family-oriented animated fare such as *Rugrats* which appeals to younger children. DreamWorks founding partner Steven Spielberg will executive produce the new series', as he has on signature "Steven Spielberg Presents..." Warner Bros. shows such as *Animaniacs* and *Tiny Toons.* He said, "We are extremely pleased to be in business with Nickelodeon. They have always pushed the envelope... and I am really looking for-

ward to working with them on stretching the boundaries of the animated action/adventure genre." DreamWorks' first animated series, *Steven Spielberg Presents Toonsylvania,* is slated to debut on Fox Kids Network in January and Kids WB! in March 1998.

Brothers FlubTo Land On Nick. New York-based production company, Sunbow Entertainment has sold their original animated series, *The Brothers Flub,* to Nickelodeon for broadcast in the 1998-99 television season. Sunbow will work with German studio Ravensburger to co-produce the 2-D animation for the series' 20 half hours. *The Brothers Flub* was created by David Burke and designed by Lazlo Nosek of Klasky Csupo. It tells the story of two quarrelsome siblings who travel the universe, delivering unusual cargo to different planets. Sunbow president C.J. Ketler said, "Nickelodeon is the perfect destination to reach kids with this unique property because of its commitment to character-driven, innovative animation."

NicktoonsTo Speak Italian. Italian broadcaster RAI will air a block of Nickelodeon programming, starting next year, on its new children's channel, RAISAT2: Ragazzi, which is available via cable and satellite. Seven Nickelodeon programs, new to Italian audiences, will be dubbed in Italian and broadcast three hours per day. The line-up includes the animated series *Rugrats, Rocko's Modern Life* and *Hey Arnold!*

Cartoon Net Greenlights Antonucci & McCracken Series. Cartoon Network has announced their latest lineup of new and acquired programs for fall 1998. Among the ten series being added to the slate are two new, original series: *Ed, Edd 'n' Eddy,* created by Danny Antonucci (*Lupo the Butcher*), and *The Powerpuff Girls,* created by Craig McCracken, which will be the fourth series to emerge from the World Premiere Toons series of shorts. *Ed, Edd & Eddy* tells the story of three suburban kids facing the throes of puberty, and will be produced by Antonucci and his Vancouver, Canada-based company, a.k.a. Cartoon. *The Powerpuff Girls* will be produced by Hanna-Barbera, like the three other series developed out of the World Premiere Toons pilot shorts: *Dexter's Laboratory, Cow & Chicken* and *Johnny Bravo.* In addition to the two new series, Cartoon Network has also selected eight existing series from the library of sister company, Warner Bros.: *Batman, Beetlejuice, Alvin and the Chipmunks, The Fantastic Voyage of Sinbad, The All New Gumby, Road Rovers, Super Friends* and *Waynehead.* In addition, Cartoon Network has acquired several animated features from Universal, including *Balto, Fievel Goes West* and the *Land Before Time* package.

Beavis & Butt-head Are Dead. Huh-huh-heh-huh. The final episode of *Beavis and Butt-head* aired on MTV (U.S.) on November 28 and 29. Titled *Beavis and Butt-head are Dead,* the episode depicts classmates and teachers assuming the characters are dead when they don't show up at school. The program was preceded by a special, *Beavis and Butt-head Do Thanksgiving With Kurt Loder,* on October 27. Though series creator Mike Judge is no longer working with MTV on the production of new episodes, the network will re-run the library of *Beavis and Butt-head* episodes indefinitely. Also, in January, the fifth annual "Butt-Bowl" special will air during the Super Bowl half-time. So, while Beavis and Butt-head may be pronounced dead, it looks like they will not be forgotten.

Spawn Of Spawn. HBO is preparing a second season of their adult animated series, *Todd McFarlane's Spawn.* The first six episodes began airing on the U.S. cable network in May 1997, as the debut original series produced by HBO Animation. The second series of six episodes will air in spring 1998, and additional episodes are also in the works. Missed the first season? Viewers had a chance to catch all six episodes again, on HBO December 19 and 26, or you can buy the video from HBO Home Video.

HomeVideo

Batman Flying Onto Home Video. Warner Bros. Home Video has announced plans to release the first Batman feature-length, direct-to-video animated movie on March 17, 1998. The 70-minute film, titled *Batman & Mr. Freeze: Subzero,* will be available for $19.96, and will be promoted with extensive cross-promotions. Warner Bros. hopes to catch the wave of consumer interest in the Batman franchise, boosted through home video re-releases of the live-action films, which have sold more than 35 million units so far.

Swords And Cleavage. On November 11, U.S. distributor Kitty Media released *Legend of Reyon: The God of Darkness,* an English-subtitled Japanese erotic fantasy/action anime title described as "a story of good and evil in scantily clad outfits." Running time is 45 minutes and retail price is $29.95.

(Colossal) Pictures' Dilbert campaign for Office Depot. © Scott Adams.

Commercials

Spotlight

Dilbert, the comic strip character created by Scott Adams, has yet to be an animated series, but in a new commercial campaign for retail chain Office Depot, the shy, disgruntled office worker is claiming more than his 30 seconds of TV fame. The first two spots in the U.S. $30 million campaign (Wyse Advertising, Cleveland) were created by San Francisco-based **(Colossal) Pictures** and satellite director Chuck Gammage. Four more spots are in production at the studio, and additional commercial projects featuring Dilbert are in development. **(Colossal) Pictures** also created a series of six interstitial animated shorts for the Disney Channel. Ranging between one and two minutes, *The Mix Ups* depict the silly mishaps of a fumbling family, all in a colorful pastel 2-D style described as "neo-Fifties." The spots were all directed by George Evelyn and Sam Register, with animation done by Chuck Gammage Animation in Ontario, Canada . . . New York-based post production company **CHARLEX** created seven 15 and 10-second commercials for the Partnership for A Drug-Free America, for a campaign called "Happy Heroin Hints." Set to narration by comedian David Spade, the spots feature animated psychedelic graphics "acting out" the negative affects of heroin . .. . . . London-based **Uli Meyer Animation** created a spot for Johnson & Johnson Consumer Products' Reach brand toothbrush, called *Mr. Reach,* depicting 2-D animation of "the evil Plaque Man" invading an animated character's mouth . . . . Watertown, Massachusetts-based **Fablevision Animation Studios** is working on animation sequences for The Pleasant Company's live-action series based on *American Girl Magazine*.. . . . Atlanta, Georgia-based **Mindflex Interactive & Entertainment** is creating animation sequences for "Salsa," a live-action puppet series produced by PeachStar Educational Services for distribution directly to schools through the Satellite Network . . . . Burbank, California-based **Renegade Animation** created a 30-second public service announcement (PSA) for The Global Exchange and TEAM Coalition. The pen and ink animated spot, titled *Brainless,* warns viewers of the dangers of alcohol as the cause of accidents. Darrel van Citters directed the spot and Dean Wellins animated, as well as provided the whistling soundtrack of the drinking song "Ninety-Nine Bottles of Beer on the Wall.". . . .

The "TalkingTommy Doll" is one of more than 2,000 Nickelodeon products which will be featured in Nickelodeon stores. © Nickelodeon

Licensing

Get Your Nickelodeon Knick-Knacks Here! Viacom Retail Group opened its first three Nickelodeon retail stores last month in Minneapolis, Minnesota, Long Island, New York and Schaumberg, Illinois. Additional stores are planned for 1998. Viacom, Nickelodeon's parent company, first entered the retail scene earlier this year with the Chicago launch of the first Viacom store, similar to Warner Bros.' and Disney's studio stores. The Nickelodeon stores strengthen Viacom's position in the lucrative merchandise marketplace, and offer a niche-marketplace for Nickelodeon's growing line of products, such as plush toys, figurines and clothing. Out of the more than 2,000 branded products, 75 percent of the merchandise carried will be available exclusively in the Nickelodeon stores, allowing the company to "experiment" with and test new consumer products before offering national licenses. Complete with tilted walls, purple ceilings and even a special bed with cubbies for kids to hide their stuff in, the

stores are developed with "a single goal in mind," said Viacom Retail Group president Tom Haas, "to create an official Nickelodeon headquarters that serves as the only place kids can get the complete Nickelodeon experience."

Harvey's Heavy Into Licensing. Since regaining the rights from Universal in May, Harvey Entertainment is pulling out all the stops to license their proprietary comic and cartoon characters such as Casper, Richie Rich, Wendy the Witch and Baby Huey, in all forms of media. In the past seven months, the company has secured 100 licensees, for everything from soap to sleepwear. One of the more collectible products in the works is a CD box-set of music from the original cartoons, which is being published by Edel America Records. In November, Harvey opened a U.S. $10 million, 75,000 square-foot family entertainment center in Jakarta, Indonesia. In 1998, Harvey plans to appoint 20 new international licensing agents worldwide. "The Harvey Classic Characters are ideally positioned today to benefit from merchandising opportunities created by heightened worldwide interest in the 'retro' '50s, '60s and '70s," said Harvey chairman and CEO Jeffrey A. Montgomery of the company's strategy. New animated productions featuring Harvey characters include two more direct-to-video titles slated for a fall 1998 release: *Casper Meets Wendy* and *Richie Rich's Christmas Wish*.

Books

DreamWorks Getting Into Books. DreamWorks Consumer Products has signed a multi-year license agreement with Penguin Putnam, Inc., which grants publishing rights for at least the first five animated features from DreamWorks Pictures, as well as the option to propose publishing programs for other DreamWorks properties (television, direct-to-video, etc.…). Penguin Putnam is already developing 12 formats of books for children and adults, based on *The Prince of Egypt,* the studios' first animated feature, slated for a fall '98 release. Being that *Prince of Egypt* is a Biblical tale, the publishing opportunities are wide open. All titles will be released under the newly-created DreamWorks Publishing banner.

Animated Reading. There are several new books which came out last month that will be of interest to animation fans. HarperPerennial's *The Simpsons: A Complete Guide to Our Favorite Family* by Matt Groening and Ray Richmond (reviewed in the November issue of *Animation World Magazine*) is reportedly selling out in bookstores. McFarland Publishers has Karl Cohen's *Forbidden Animation*, a chronicle of censorship in cartoons. John Libbey & Company and Level 10 has issued its first publishing of David Kilmer's comprehensive resource, *The Animated Film Collector's Guide: Worldwide Sources For Cartoons On Video And Laserdisc.* Tiger Mountain Press has Rick Goldschmidt's *The Enchanted World of Rankin/Bass,* which profiles the creators of so many classic Christmas specials. Watson-Guptill Publications has Christopher Hart's workbook-style how-to guide, *How to Draw Animation.* HarperCollins has *The Art of Anastasia* by Harvey Deneroff, an in-depth look at the making of the Fox animated feature. Hyperion Publishing is distributing Pierre Lambert's *Pinnochio,* a richly-illustrated volume initially published in French and now available in English. Prague-based animator Gene Deitch (*Nudnik, Tom Terrific*) has self-published his memoirs in a book called *For the Love of Prague.* The Ink Tank founder R.O. Blechman's illustrated story *The Juggler of Our Lady* has been published by Stewart Tabori & Chang. FableVision Animation has published an illustrated children's book called *The North Star.* Most of these books can be found or ordered through your local bookstore, except *Forbidden Animation* (call 800-253-2187), *The Animated Film Collector's Guide* (contact jlsydney@mpx.com.au), *For The Love of Prague* (contact genedeitch@traveller.cz) and *The North Star* (visit http://www.fablevision.com/nstar/thestory/ded.html). Several of these books will be reviewed in upcoming issues of *Animation World Magazine,* so stay tuned!

Technology

Get "Real" Animation On The Web. RealNetworks (formerly known as Progressive Networks) has teamed up with Macromedia to develop a new software component which enables animators to create animation with Macromedia Flash, synchronize it with a soundtrack in RealAudio, then broadcast it on the web with the streaming technology of RealSystem 5.0. Macromedia Flash, released in spring 1997, is the technology that John Kricfalusi/Spumco is using to create original web cartoons. At that time, the product was a step forward for web animation software, in that it created a way of displaying animation on a web page without excessively large file sizes or lengthy download times found with Quicktime or Shockwave. Now, with sync sound and instant play-

back capabilities of RealFlash, animators will have an opportunity to easily use the Internet as a broadcast medium for animation, and "to create full-length content on the web with the quality levels of conventional media like television or film," said RealNetworks media systems' vice president, Philip Rosedale. Headbone Interactive is one of the developers which is already "webcasting" original RealFlash content, in the form of an animated short, *Elroy*. To launch the RealFlash and RealSystem products, Animation World Network is working with Real Networks to sponsor The RealFlash Animation Festival, which is accepting entries until February 1. For entry forms, product information and a free 30-day trial, visit http://www.real.com/festival

Education

New London School. At the London Effects and Animation Festival (LEAF) in November, a new professional animation training program was launched by Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, the Guild of British Animation and FOCUS Central London, the training and enterprise program. The 24-week, intensive course, known as The London Animation School, is based on a foundation of one-on-one mentoring which will include weekly, individual sessions in which each student will meet with a representative from a local animation company. Individuals may choose from three paths of study: traditional drawn animation, computer animation using Softimage, or computer animation using Alias/Wavefront. The first session will run from January through July 1998. Successful completion of the course will give graduates a BTEC Professional Development Award. Jerry Hibbert, who is playing a key role in the program's development as chairman of the Guild of British Animation, says of the program, "It is controlled by industry for industry, and it is anticipated that the course will become [a] natural source for U.K. animation talent." For more information, contact the school at:

London Animation School
Developments at Central Saint Martins
Southampton Row
London, England, U.K. WC1B 4AP
Tel: 44 0171 514 7015, Fax: 44 0171 514 7016

Call for Entries

VRML Contest. The VRML (Virtual Reality Modeling Language) Consortium, a non-profit organization, is sponsoring a VRML contest in collaboration with 3-D Design Magazine. Designed to showcase creative use of VRML to bring interactive 3-D graphics to the Web, the contest will be divided into 5 major categories: Best Business content, Most Artistic content, Most Innovative content, Best Architecture and Best Visualization. The entry deadline is January 16, 1998. 3D Design will provide judges for the contest and winners will be announced at the VRML '98 conference in Monterey, CA (February 16-19, 1998). Prizes include software and hardware donated by VRML Consortium member companies. For entry forms and rules, and to download free VRML authoring tools, visit
http://www.vrml.org

International Broadcasting Awards. The Hollywood Radio and Television Society is soliciting entries for its 38th Annual International Broadcasting Awards. One out of 17 television categories is specifically for animation, but categories such as "Broadcast/Cable Entertainment Promotion," "Commercial Series," and "Humorous" are open to all television media. The entry deadline is January 16, 1998, and entry fees range from U.S. $150 to $300 per entry. Call (818) 789-1182 for entry forms and information.

New Kids Fest In Toronto. The Toronto International Film Festival Group is launching Sprockets: Toronto International Film Festival for Children, a new venue to showcase live-action and animated film fare for kids, in a festival setting, to family audiences. Rather than the traditional competition format, Sprockets is being programmed by a curator/festival director, Jane Schoettle, former director of the Milk and ZOOM! International Children's Festivals. The 6-day event will take place in Toronto during the third week of April (exact dates and location TBD). Schoettle said that she is still looking for quality animated films to include in the program, particularly international films from outside of North America. Entries, which can include shorts, TV episodes or features which have not been broadcast or theatrically released in Canada before April 18, are being accepted until January 9. VHS videocassettes should be sent to:
Sprockets c/o Cinematheque Ontario
2 Carlton Street, Toronto, ON Canada M5B 1J3
Email, for further information: sprocket@torfilmfest.ca

Singapore Animation Fiesta. The second annual Animation Fiesta, organized by Temasek Polytechnic, will take place during the Singapore

Festival for the Arts, June 19-21, 1998. This small festival welcomes submissions of animation, video and multimedia works, but is not a competitive event. The entry deadline for all submissions is December 31, 1997. For information, contact btea@tp.ac.sg

For more information on festival organizers Temasek Polytechnic and animation in Singapore, see Gigi Hu's article, "Animation in Singapore," in the February 1998 issue of *Animation World Magazine*. http://www.awn.com/mag/issue1.11/articles/hu1.11.html

Computer Animation Conference. The Computer Graphics Society (CGS) and the IEEE Computer Society in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania has put out a call for papers and films to be presented at the 11th annual Conference on Computer Animation at the Center for Human Modeling and Simulation (HMS) at the University of Pennsylvania, June 8-10, 1998. Academic papers on the following topics of research are being sought: motion control; animation for scientific visualization; keyframe techniques; animation in engineering; motion capture; motion blur and temporal antialiasing; robotics and animation; physics and animation; virtual humans and avatars; behavioral animation; virtual collaborative environments (VCE); real-time simulation; virtual reality; medical applications; sound and speech synchronization; and physics-based animation. The submission deadline for unpublished papers (up to 20 pages) is February 3, 1998, and authors will be notified by March 15. For detailed submission and conference information, contact the University of Pennsylvania's Department of Computer and Information Science at dnm@central.cis.upenn.edu

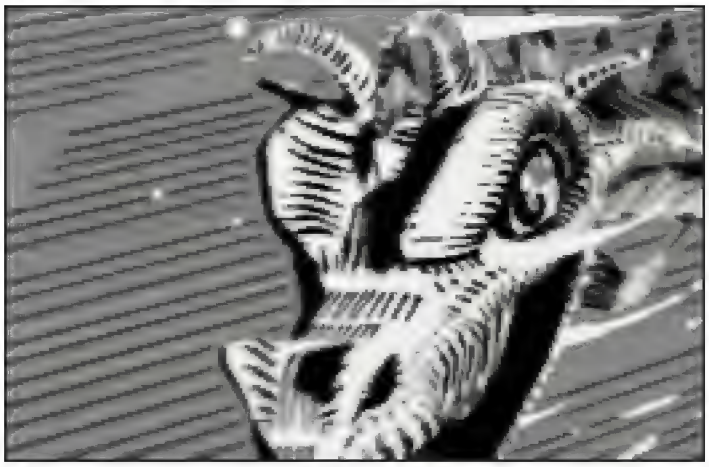
Events

Hubley Happenings at NYC MOMA. The Museum of Modern Art in New York is presenting a two-part exhibition on the work of The Hubley Studio and animators Faith and John Hubley, starting on December 19, 1997 and running through February 1, 1998. The retrospective will open with a screening of a collection of many of the Hubley films, including world premieres of two new independent films: Faith Hubley's *Beyond the Shadow Place* and Emily Hubley's *One Self: Fish Girl.* Most of the artwork in the two exhibitions is curated from a major gift of original artwork donated to the Museum by Faith Hubley. The first exhibit will be "The Hubley Studio: A Home for Animation," showcasing original animation art from productions created at the studio since 1956, and the second, "The Art of the Hubleys," includes artwork from more than 50 independent films created by Faith, John and Emily Hubley, including their seven Academy Award nominated films, three of which won Oscars (*Moonbird,* 1960, *The Hole,* 1963 and *Tijuana Brass Double Feature* 1966). "The exhibition will highlight the Hubleys importance as artists of a unique and vibrant form of animation," said MOMA's assistant curator Mary Corliss, "their sophisticated and enchanting fables, visualized in a vivid, impressionistic style, liberated the [art] form from the prevailing mode of representational drawing and rowdy humor." For information and tickets, call The MOMA at (212) 708-9400.

Emily Hubley's film One Self: Fish Girl premiered at the MOMA retrospective in December. © Emily Hubley.

MIP Asia, the television industry program market for the Asia Pacific region, was held December 4-6 in Hong Kong. Among the animated deals which took place: Korea Broadcasting purchased a block of animation from the Polish Telewija Polska and Italy's Mondo TV and Egypt's Areen formed an alliance to distribute animation to Arab territories. MIP Asia is presented by Reed Midem, organizers of the European MIPCOM, MIP and MILIA markets. After four years in Hong Kong, next year's MIP Asia will take place in Suntec City, Singapore, December 10-12.

Macy's Parade An Animated Affair. The 71st annual Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade took place on Thursday, November 27. The televised event drove, marched, and flew animated characters in many forms through the streets of New York. Among the appearances were giant helium balloon air sculptures of characters from animated series, films and comics such as *Arthur, Rugrats,* Dr. Seuss' *The Grinch Who Stole Christmas, Bumpé, Garfield, The Pink Panther, Sonic the Hedgehog, Spider-Man,* and The Quik Bunny, as well as floats from *Anastasia* and *Annabelle's Wish.* However panic struck the crowd when the Cat in the Hat balloon



Wild Brain's award-winning commercial, Up... Down... Up. © Wild Brain.

became entangled with a lamp post, uprooting it. Several members of the crowd were injured and required hospital attention.

Awards

Animators Behind Glass. The Museum of the Moving Image in London recently selected winners for its 1997/98 Channel 4/MOMI Animation Scheme, a program which yearly places four young animators in a residency at the museum. Sandra Ensby, Lizzie Oxby and Sam Morrison, graduates of the Royal College of Art, and David Evans, a Newport graduate, will spend the next three months, and £4400 in grants, working individually with a producer and script advisor to each develop a short animated film. As a "live exhibit," the animators work in a glass-walled studio within the museum. Of the 18 films so far completed through this program, ten have already been broadcast on Channel 4, including *Death and The Mother* by Ruth Lingford, *The Mill* by Petra Freeman and *The Broken Jaw* by Chris Shepherd.

CableACE Winners. The 19th Annual National CableACE Award winners were announced in November, in a non-televised ceremony. In the Animated Programming Special or Series category, the winner is Comedy Central's *South Park.* In the Children's Special or Series - 8 and Younger category, the winner is HBO's *Mother Goose: A Rappin' and Rhymin' Special.* In the previously announced Craft and International Categories, *Rugrats* writers Jon Cooksey, Ali Marie Matheson, J. David Stern, Mark Palmer and David N. Weiss were awarded for Writing in a Children's Special or Series.

London Advertising Awards. The London International Advertising Awards (LIAA) took place recently in London. The global competition awarded commercials in 143 categories, including three for animation:

- Animation-Cel: Wild Brain (U.S.) for Mainstay Mutual Funds' *Up... Down... Up.*
- Animation-Computer: Pytka (U.S.) for HBO's *Chimps.*
- Animation-Stop Frame: Will Vinton Studios (U.S.) for Nissan's *Toys.*

LEAF Winners. The London Effects and Animation Festival (LEAF), which took place in November as part of Digital Media World in London, presented awards in eight categories. The jury, comprised of Bill Boffin of The University of Bradford (U.K.), Jerry Hibbert of Hibbert Ralph Animation (U.K.), Phil Hurrell and Terry Hytlon of SVC Television (U.K.), Christina Pishirus of Televisual Magazine (U.K.), Ian Rosenbloom of BBC Open University (U.K.), and Dave Throssel of The Mill (U.K.) acknowledged the following films as "the best in computer generated animation and visual effects from around the world."

- Feature Film: Industrial Light and Magic (U.S.) for *Men in Black.*
- Commercial: Industrial Light and Magic (U.S.) for Canada Dry *Domino.*
- Education and Training: BBC Horizon (U.K.) for *Walking With Dinosaurs.*
- Short Film: Ronin Animation (U.S.) for *Ahoy, The Movie.*
- Music Video: SVC Television and The Framestore (U.K.) for Alisha's Attic: *Indestructible.*
- Titles, Idents & Stings: Garner MacLennan Design (Australia) for *Arena.*
- Simulation: Ex Machina (France) for *Mad Racers.*
- Student Work: Julien Villanueva and Yann Blondel for *Ziride.*

The 1998 LEAF will take place next November 17-19. For information and entry forms, contact Digital Media International in London at Tel: (44) 181 995 3632 or Fax: (44) 181995 3633

Wendy Jackson is Associate Editor of Animation World Magazine.

DESERT ISLAND SERIES

On A Desert Island With.....Producers' Picks

This month, we asked some respected animation producers what ten animated films they would want to have with them on a desert island. Iain Harvey is a producer with The Illuminated Film Company. He is currently working on an animated adaptation of *A Christmas Carol,* and his most recent productions are the animated short film, *T.R.A.N.S.I.T* and the animated series *The Very Hungry Caterpillar & Other Stories* by Eric Carle. Carol Greenwald is director of development for Children's Programming at WGBH in Boston, and executive producer on the animated series *Arthur*, which is in its third season of production. Claude Huhardeaux is chairman & CEO of 2001 in Paris, whose current projects include two feature films and three animated series: *Funny Monsters, Ludo Kid* and *Tranches de foot*. Most recently, he produced Marie Paccou's short film, *Un Jour.*

Among the favorites of our three participants, *The Simpsons, Pinnochio* and Nick Park's Wallace & Gromit films all tallied in with multiple selections.

Iain Harvey's Top Ten:

A Christmas Carol, a project currently being produced by Iain Harvey, with a script written by Robert Llewellyn, art direction by Jill Brooks and music composed by Trevor Jones. ©The Illuminated Film Company/Igelfilm 1998.

1. *The Sinking Of The Lusitania* by Winsor McCay. "An early and still one of the best demonstrations of the dramatic - and propaganda - possibilities of animation."
2. *Fritz The Cat* by Ralph Bakshi. " For its sheer exuberance."
3. *Pinocchio* (Disney). "Selected ahead of *Fantasia* if only because of its superb dramatic structure. In any case probably Disney's best."
4. *Damon The Mower* by George Dunning. "For poetry in animation."
5. *Granpa* by Dianne Jackson. "For the imaginative possibilities of animation."
6. *The Hill Farm* by Mark Baker. "*The Village* is more technically perfect, but somehow this film displays the freshness of a new talent discovering his art."
7. *Duck Amuck* by Chuck Jones. "For the joy of the possibilities of animation."
8. *The Wrong Trousers* by Nick Park. "...or *A Close Shave* or *Creature Comforts*. How do you choose from Nick Park's wonderful films?"
9. *The Nightmare Before Christmas* by Henry Selick (Disney). "For its sheer technical brilliance."
10. *Jungle Book* (Disney). "For its wonderful musical track and even then I discover I have left out *Toy Story* and so many other favorites!"

Carol Greenwald's Selections:

1. *The Snowman* (TVC Studios).
2. *Wind in the Willows.* "The Cosgrove Hall version, and any of their other wonderful model animation folk and fairy tales, like *The Pied Piper."*
3. Any and all of Nick Park's Wallace & Gromit films.

4. *Horton Hears A Who* and *Horton Hatches An Egg* by Chuck Jones.
5. John Matthew's adaptations of Arnold Lobel's books, the *Frog & Toad* series and *Uncle Elephant*, with his version of *Stanley & the Dinosaur* a close runner-up.
6. *The Simpsons* (Film Roman).
7. *Babar & Father Christmas* directed by Gerry Capelle for Atkinson Film Arts/Crawleys.
8. The first *Madeline* episode by Robert Cannon (DIC Entertainment).
9. *Toy Story* (Pixar/Disney).
10. *Pinocchio* (Disney). "I can't go through a whole list without at least one Disney movie!"

Carol Greenwald. Photo by and © Millicent Harvey.

Claude Huhardeaux's Favorites:

1. *Ren & Stimpy* by John Kricfalusi.
2. *Duckman* (Klasky Csupo).
3. *The Simpsons* (Film Roman).
4. The Wallace & Gromit films by Nick Park (Aardman).
5. *Les Shadoks* by Jacques Rouxel.
6. *La linea* by Osvaldo Cavandoli.
7. Road Runner and Wile E. Coyote films by Chuck Jones.
8. *Le tombeau des lucioles* by Isao Takahata.
9. *Nausicaa* by Hayao Miyazaki.
10. *Ghost in the Shell* by Mamoru Oshii.

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Never before available!!
Original Production cels from the Oscar nominated film ***The Big Snit*** by director **Richard Condie**

The Dirty Birdy

The Dirty Birdy
by Dilly ©1997
"I've been to places my mind has taken me- but there are other worlds that I have yet to see that only my heart can take me."
Color by
Through the Woods

By John Dilworth

Motion Capture & Stop Motion February 1998

Our February issue will look at both the oldest and the newest forms of 3-D animation: the art of stop-motion and the technology of real-time motion capture. Heikki Jokinen is journeying to Estonia to capture the 40th anniversary of the studio Nukufilm. Karen Raugust will reveal the minds behind Wallace and Gromit's licensing and marketing success while Barry Purves will give us his opinion on the state of the stop-motion industry. Also, have you ever watched a stop motion film and thought, "What did they use to do that?" Next month we will tell you some of our favorites from the big names of stop-motion. Medialab is going to lead us step by step through the high-tech world of motion capture. Plus, some thoughts on the theoretical issues raised by motion capture will be discussed by Gregory Peter Panos, founding co-director of the Performance Animation Society. As an added bonus, two pioneers from both fields will sit down to a dinner conversation.

This month's Student Corner is an article for which we know people have been waiting. Tom Brierton will discuss how to make armatures and where to get the necessary supplies.

NATPE will also be reviewed as will Karl Cohen's new book *Forbidden Animation: Censored Cartoons and Blacklisted Animators*. This issue will also include a very special feature. Revered Disney greats, Frank Thomas and Ollie Johnston will discuss Pierre Lambert's book *Pinocchio*. Max Sims will also introduce Maya, Alias/Wavefront's anticipated new 3-D software.

Animation World Magazine 1998 Calendar

Motion Capture and Stop Motion	(February)
The Art of Pre-Production	(March)
Animation in Unexpected Places	(April)
Visual Effects And Experimental Animation	(May)